THE COMMONWEAL

A Weekly Review of Literature, The Arts, and Public Affairs.

Volume V | New York, Wednesday, February 2, 1927 | Number 13

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THE FUTURE OF THE COMMONWEAL

THE editors of The Commonweal feel very keenly that by far the most important words which this issue contains appear in our advertising pages—the announcement that the price of this journal will now be $5.00 a year, except in the case of those members of the Calvert Associates who choose to continue the payment of $10.00 a year, or more, in order to support its work. We apply one page of our advertising space to setting forth the particulars of this announcement. We use another page elsewhere to quote some of the favorable things said about us, by other papers and by persons. Up to this time we have printed, in our correspondence columns, far more unfavorable comments and criticisms than those reflecting favorably upon our work. For once at least, we are speaking fair words about ourselves. It is a happy and hopeful circumstance that we are able to use the words of others in this connection, more freely, and perhaps more forcefully, than our own words. Nevertheless, there is a time for all things under the sun, and the application of this piece of the wisdom of Solomon, just at present, is that there are excellent reasons why the editors of The Commonweal should now speak out clearly, frankly and simply to their readers concerning the work in which they have been engaged.

We have said that to us by far the most important thing in this issue of The Commonweal is the announcement of our change of policy. And yet this issue of The Commonweal deals with many exceedingly important things—the unprecedented persecution of the Church in Mexico, the exceedingly grave crisis of affairs in China, and many other matters which are of such consequence that compared with them the fate of a weekly journal might seem trivial indeed. Perhaps only the egotism of its editors could justify, or, at any rate, explain their sense of the importance of their own editorial and business crisis. Yet at the risk of seeming to emphasize their egotism, they cannot help but feel that there is more than a personal, more even than an official, or business, reason for believing that the announcement referred to, and the response which it is to receive, is of real public as well as private importance.

When The Commonweal began publication a little more than two years ago, it had a body of between three and four thousand readers. This body of readers had been built up by hard work covering a period of nearly two years prior to the publication of the first number of this journal. While, of course, there was a small group who believed that a journal controlled and

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edited by laymen of the Catholic Church could, and under proper auspices would, do a work of high value in the service both of religion and of the public welfare, outside the ranks of this small group there was a wide-spread scepticism, also a deeply rooted disbelief, also an even wider area of blank indifference. Similar movements had been launched before; all had failed. So profound was the effect of these three factors—namely, scepticism, disbelief, and indifference—that it was soon recognized by the group bent upon making the experiment despite these three factors, that it would be quite impossible to launch such a paper as they had in mind in the ordinary business way. They could not ask for subscriptions to a stock or bond issue, because even their own faith and optimism did not—at that time anyhow—go so far as to believe that the publication of their journal could produce any financial profits for anybody. All that was left to do was to ask for support in the same spirit as a school asks for support, or an art museum, or a symphony or chamber music organization, or a scientific work—simply because, in their own opinion at least, the work they had in mind to attempt would be beneficial, and there was a real need for the benefits that would flow from it; therefore, they were justified in trying to obtain funds to carry it on for its own sake and not for the sake of profits.

Sufficient support was obtained to begin the work. In our first number, we said that The Commonweal was not and would not be the organ of any political party, or of any single school of economic or social theory. And while the Calvert Associates, the organization founded to support The Commonweal, are for the most part members of the Catholic Church, they welcomed members of other forms of religious faith, simply uniting in a common belief that religion is at once the foundation and the only sure guarantee of the most desirable forms of civilization and culture. Furthermore, they believed that there should be an organ designed for general circulation that would be definitely Catholic in the presentation of its subject-matter, and that definitely Catholic principles should be applied to the subjects that fell within its editorial purview. But it was to be in no sense—nor could it possibly assert itself to be—an authoritative or officially authorized spokesman of the Catholic Church. It was, and it was to remain, the independent, personal product of its editors and contributors, laymen for the most part. Its pages were open to writers holding different forms of Christian or non-Christian belief. Where the opinions of its editors, contributors, and readers should differ on subjects as yet unsettled by competent authority, The Commonweal was to be an open forum for the discussion of such differences in a spirit of good temper.

The three or four thousand readers to whom The Commonweal went with its first message have increased steadily with each issue. These members reside in every state in the country; many others are residents of Canada, South America, various European countries, Australia, India, South Africa. The Commonweal can justly claim an international influence. It can even more positively assert that it has exerted an influence nationally out of all proportion to the number of its readers. This is principally due to the fact that the point fundamental to the whole policy of The Commonweal, namely, the point that the Catholic faith is resurgent throughout the world today with a potency and a multiplicity of manifestations such as has not been witnessed for centuries, has become even more apparent during the two years of The Commonweal's existence than it was when this magazine began publication.

The Mexican persecution of the Catholic Church, capital instance of the vitality of the Faith, and of the problems which the clash of that Faith with other forces is producing in the world, has underlined our thesis with the red of blood. In this place we are only referring to the Mexican situation because it is one more proof of another point fundamental to the thesis of The Commonweal, namely, that the duty of enlightening those around us concerning the Catholic Church—its principles, its philosophy, its problems—devolves upon Catholics themselves. If they do not do anything to minimize and overcome the evil effects of public apathy to the just claims of the Catholic Church; moreover, if they cease to carry on the apostolic work of Catholicism—which surely is the task of bringing to those not of the Faith at least the social benefits of that Faith, if not the gift of the Faith itself, which God alone has within His keeping—then only Catholics themselves are to blame.

February is Catholic Press Month. The bishops and the pastors are appealing to their people to increase their support of Catholic newspapers, reviews, and magazines. Far too often, we suspect, the result of such appeals is ephemeral. Here and there men and women, touched by such appeals, will open their pocket-books and subscribe to this, that, or the other Catholic periodical. But what the Catholic press needs first of all is to be read, not merely to be bought and paid for by indifferent readers. It needs readers to appreciate its merits, to coöperate in its work, yes, and to reveal its many shortcomings. It particularly needs vehicles to reach the non-Catholic world in which Catholics after all are such a minority in numbers and almost negligible in their intellectual influence. As part of its own duty in this movement, The Commonweal goes directly with its case to the present members of the Calvert Associates, and to its other readers, asking the members to remain with us as members, and to coöperate with us in every possible manner in calling the attention of other Catholics, and of intelligent, fair-minded non-Catholics to the fact that now The Commonweal is able to place its subscription price on the same level as other journals of its own kind.

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THE COMMONWEAL

Published weekly and copyrighted 1927, in the United States by the Calvert Publishing Corporation, Grand Central Terminal, New York, N. Y.

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United States: $5.00 — Foreign: $6.00

Canada: 5.50 — Single Copies: .10

WEEK BY WEEK

CHINA in the throes of a nationalistic revolution is not a pleasure resort, either for the orientals themselves or for citizens of other lands. The retreat of all foreigners from the country would not mean peace, responsible government, or social reconstruction. That is a fact worth bearing in mind while considering the phenomenon that more deeply interests the American or European observer—the abandonment of almost all strongholds and trading centres excepting Shanghai. A few years ago, in fact as recently as the first negotiations about revision of the tariff schedules, no one would have credited the report that Great Britain would soon be gathering the frightened flock of her representatives under the shelter of ships of war, and that the whole "industrial expansion" achieved by a generation of engineers and business men would be laid waste. But now these things have come to pass, with a thoroughness which only those who know China intimately can realize. The roots of the disorder seem to lie deeper than the sources of the Boxer Rebellion. Then and now, of course, absurd stories were set afoot to kindle the fury of the populace. News of an attack upon a Dominican convent, fomented by a fanatical report that the children cared for by the nuns were being dissected for scientific purposes, compares very well with incidents chronicled in the history of older uprisings. Religious foundations, being defenseless, are always the first targets of that bigotry which nationalism can use so advantageously. But what is nationalism today in China? It would seem to be a mood exploited by military factions interested in the acquisition of power in that gross, tangible sense which is so actual in all countries lacking stable and reasoned concepts of government.

THEREFORE, while anxiety for the future and particularly for the fate of Christian missionaries is shared by us all, it is useful to consider the truth that, despite all weaknesses and defections from principle, the western nations really can offer to backward peoples the example of political order. We too seldom reflect upon the idea, formulated by Aquinas, that by reason of the continuing triumph of grace over human nature, the barbaric purposes of the state have been transcended. Government, which under purely primitive conditions is simply restraint of crime and the dominance of the strong, became the earthly guardian of a Christian people and carried out a mission of justice and social charity. Inevitably the rise of imperialism, the thing now at stake in China, was contemporary with a wide-spread repudiation, by philosophers and statesmen, of this concept of political rule. To their minds even the mission of Christ was a thing that might be subordinated to purposes of economic and political dominion. And just as we ourselves should have neither peace nor good government if this principle were accepted in practice amongst us, so also is there no hope that territories in the Orient or elsewhere will be free of cataclysms while imperialism and its corollary of exploited nationalism abide. After all, the gist of the whole problem is contained in the sacred advice to seek first the kingdom of faith.

THE decision of the Supreme Pontiff to dissolve the flourishing Catholic Boy Scout organization rather than subject it to Fascist discipline, is one of those dignified gestures of submission in which a reproof lurks that the most hardened cannot escape. Those who are acquainted with the history of the Church, in good times and bad, cannot have failed to have noticed two characteristics of her action where what might be termed the outlying spheres of her influence are concerned. The first is that she has never been in a hurry to assume responsibilities only remotely connected with her teaching and saving function. History (in Paraguay and elsewhere) is testimony that she can be a very efficient ruler indeed. But she has generally contented herself with giving her benediction and encouragement to what seemed good, and warning against what seemed evil. The second is that, when summoned by the civil (or uncivil) power to evacuate organizations not strictly religious, built up by her, she has often displayed an alacrity in submission that disappointed the more militant among her children. The real reasons for her docility are not such as need encourage her enemies. Knowing the exact point at which resistance will become a duty, and at which the terrible weapon must be drawn which she is all the more loath to use because she knows it is of unearthly temper, it

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is a point, not only of good manners, but good ethics, for her not to raise a supreme issue on subsidiary matters. In any case, the organizations that will not have her as an honored guest, sooner or later reap the fruit of their inhospitality. "Qui mange le Pape en meurt" (who eats the Pope dies of it) is a motto that has already proved its accuracy, and Italy's dictator, when he next reviews his black-shirted young robots, and misses any religious emblem above their ranks, might well make it matter for thought of an intensive nature.

WE gather from a recent number of Irénikon, a magazine published in Belgium by the monks of the Reunion of the Churches, that there has recently been a recrudescence of active religious persecution in Soviet Russia. At Moscow, the monasteries of Saints Martha and Mary, and of Saint Nicholas, have been closed by the authorities and the former turned into a workman's club. At Leningrad, one of the churches connected with the great lara of Saint Alexander Neveski has become a crematory. At Vitebsk, the beautiful Orthodox cathedral is now a storehouse for Soviet archives. Arrests and prosecutions have again become general and affect both the Catholics and the Orthodox. Monsignor Leonid Fiodoroff, the exarch of the Russian Catholics of the Byzantine rite, sentenced in 1923 to ten years' imprisonment, but liberated at the end of April last, has again been arrested and put in prison. The prison camp of Solovki, situated on a group of islands in the White Sea, is receiving a constant stream of persons, for the most part ecclesiastics, condemned to suffer the tortures of that terrible place. The lot of ecclesiastics is purposely made harder than that of other prisoners. The inmates are, moreover, deprived of any possible opportunity for the exterior practice of their religion. Even Christmas and Easter pass, as other days, in this intolerable servitude. Attempts to make the sign of the Cross are checked with the whip. In the face of this slow martyrdom, suffered by so many Orthodox priests and bishops, dare we say that the Russian Church is dying?

NOW that death has ended the long tragedy of Carlotta, once empress of Mexico, there must be many who ask what the fate of the country of the Montezumas would have been if her dream of it had become reality. The whole adventure was, of course, a romantic mistake. It reposed on the flimsy belief that a symbol of order could halt the swirling cycle of Mexican chaos and change; and so in the end, Maximilian died like a first-class soldier and gentleman, Carlotta knelt at the feet of indifferent monarchs until anguish had destroyed her reason, and another series of revolutions began in Mexico. Of particular importance to us is the fact that American intervention, dictated by the Monroe Doctrine, was the final blow at Maximilian's power. Ironically enough, it was one of the most romantic of soldiers, Phil Sheridan, who virtually carried the order of execution for the visionary and far too righteous Hapsburg prince. He must have wondered, as we do now, what good would come ultimately from the determination to Americanize the two vast continents. To date, it has not gained for us a single friend. Though often enough it meant considerable sacrifice and danger, the final result in Mexico has been legal, economic, and political chaos. May it not be that we too, quite like Carlotta and her husband, have been entertaining a romantic view of the problem? The mysterious, oriental languor of the people whose extremes of conduct are indicated by bloodshed and Guadalupe, is an abyss into which our nicely formulated concepts sink without an echo, and out of which there rise staggering phantoms we cannot even bear to see. Perhaps it was not personal failure which broke the mind of Carlotta. Perhaps it was the stark, engulfing vision of Mexico.

WHAT he designated the most important political question now before the American people, was discussed by Reverend John A. Ryan recently, in an address at the Mid-Day Luncheon Club of Springfield, Illinois. This is the inevitable increase in the cost to the public of transportation, light and power, as a result of the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Indianapolis water case. As Dr. Ryan pointed out, the ruling of the court of last resort establishes a precedent which is full of danger in giving the owners of a public utility, "although they possess a monopoly of a necessary commodity, and although their money is practically guaranteed," a return of no less than 30 percent on their actual investment. It is easy to understand that if state legislatures and Congress do not make a clear and reasonable definition of "fair value," "fair return," and "going value," the railroads will seek the same increase, and all other public utilities concerns will turn to the public and demand higher rates to meet this "fair return" upon their valuations. Undoubtedly, a situation such as this should become a live political issue until the day it is changed.

IN recent years, judges and magistrates have repeatedly called attention to the prevalence of perjury in the courts. That a deplorable condition was becoming every day worse, was generally admitted; but how to correct it was a problem which appeared to defy solution. Now comes Magistrate Joseph E. Corrigan, of New York, with a suggestion of real value. He has proposed to the District Attorney, to the Chief Justice of the Court of Special Sessions, to the Chief City Magistrate, to the Baumes Crime Commission, and to the Bar Association, that the crime of perjury be changed from a felony to a misdemeanor. The purpose of this contemplated change is to take perjury cases out of the hands of juries, and allow them to be dealt with summarily by judges in Special Sessions. There is no doubt that juries generally are loath to

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find a conviction for perjury in any but the most flagrant cases. The seriousness of making an oath in the name of the Almighty, and then glibly lying "to help out a friend," or for some similar reason, seems to have been entirely overlooked by many who have discussed the condition as an impediment to the administration of justice. If any way can be found to reduce what is an insult to God as well as an affront to the courts, a step forward will have been taken.

WHEN Reverend Dr. William Walker Rockwell, professor of church history in Union Theological Seminary, told the Lutheran Ministers' Association a few days ago, that neither John Calvin nor Martin Luther were prohibitionists, he made no startlingly new revelation. But it is a pity that his remarks were not broadcast to certain parts of the country where they might have been pondered to advantage. The Calvinism of today which seeks to make people good by law, needs the reminder that Calvin not only drank in moderation, but that he was given a special wine allowance for the entertainment of his many visitors at Geneva. The Puritans of today may listen with profit to the words of the distinguished student and historian: "It is one of the jokes of history that the Puritans are credited with being the fathers of prohibition. There was liquor aboard the Mayflower, and early Massachusetts did not prohibit the sale of liquor except on Sundays and to the Indians." This is one of the jokes of history. There are others; in fact, to those with one fixed idea, the whole history of mankind, of movements as well as men, of customs as well as laws, is made into a joke.

LAST week The Commonweal printed a letter expressing the repudiation of WHAP, a New York radio station, by the Christian Science Committee on Publication. The station in question has angered a great many people by reason of bigoted absurdities emanating from it regarding Catholics and Jews. It is now a pleasure to notice that the Publishing Society, an authoritative body inside the Christian Science Church, has now formally disapproved the entire enterprise by declaring: "The station is conducted by a group of persons using the term 'Christian Science' without authority from the governing board of the Christian Science movement." No one familiar with the courteous and intelligent character of the Monitor would have believed it linked with the malicious drivel which flashed and soared above the chimney-pots of Manhattan. But the existence of WHAP continues to indicate grave danger latent in the possible abuse of radio stations. The peril lies not so much in what is said, as in the fact that the prestige with which radio is still endowed in the public mind makes the passions enkindled by vicious propaganda unusually harmful.

SPEAKING at the opening of a large new hospital in the city of Brooklyn, Bishop Shahan, rector of the Catholic University of America, reminded his audience of a very important fact: "There is surely a Catholic pathology—the long story of the practical interest of the Church in the physical sufferings, not alone of her own children, but of all mankind. In the midst of the great pestilence of Carthage, Saint Cyprian could invite the Mediterranean world to admire the common devotion of Christian men and women to all the victims, without distinction of creed. Long before the mighty empire of Rome collapsed, the first great Catholic hospitals were established within its borders. A new institution, of universal human value, was thus created by the Catholic religion, and perpetuated by the love and the sacrifice of clergy and people. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in the world. It was the envy of dying paganism, sensible that in itself it possessed no such response of life or promise for the future." And it is an obvious and benignant fact that never from that day until this, did Catholic consciousness fail to envisage the corporal works of mercy. In our own immediate time, the testimony is not merely that of constantly more numerous hospitals and institutions, but also the active interest of the universal Church in such problems as the relief of the Near East.

ONE of the most remarkable bits of apologetic we have ever seen, is quoted from The Churchman, by the Religious Press Digest: "The heart of the British people is as evangelical as it ever was. It knows that Great Britain owes to the Reformation, not only its liberty of thought, speech and action, but the British empire itself. There is not, nor can there ever be, any reconciliation between that empire and the Church of Rome, so long as the British empire stands for liberty, and the Church of Rome stands for tyranny or autocracy." In the first place, one may suggest that only the "heart" could know such a thing as that liberty is the product of the reform in England. The head, particularly when it profits by a good course in history at Cambridge or Oxford, normally manifests a desire to change its religious affiliations. But it is rather astonishing to see "liberty" enumerated among the various virtues of the British empire. So far as we have been able to discover, none of the peoples associated with this really grandiose triumph of imperialism, has been aware of any outstanding accession of freedom. In fact, if recent reports have not been entirely spurious, there has been some complaint on precisely this score by Irishmen, Indians, and Egyptians. There also took place, not long ago, a conference which proudly proclaimed at the end of its sessions that the empire had "ended." Nothing could, after all, be more agreeable to the "tyranny of Rome" than to concede the parentage of imperialism to the Reformation. But to christen the child "liberty," is really a little too kind.

"THEY do these things differently in France," Yorick's fellow-traveler in The Sentimental Journey

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was fond of noting. So used are we to considering the French as a law-abiding nation, shepherded through life by the Code Napoléon, that the action of Abbé Bethléem, as reported recently in the press, comes with something of the same pleasant thrill that we get when the little fellow in Screenland throws the saloon bully through the swinging doors. Faced with what he considered too liberal a display of anatomy on a bookstall in the precincts of the Gare du Nord, the Abbé, whom correspondents agree in describing as large and rugged, did not content himself by taking notes for legal action. "Seizing the offending publications by bundles in his powerful hands," we are told, "he began tearing them in pieces, scattering the fragments on the ground." This action comes too close upon remarks we made anent Mayor Walker's recent action on home-grown pornography for us to do more than hint at its significance, and approve, at least, the spirit it registers. Abbé Bethléem, as those who read his annual series, Livres à Lire et à Proscrire, with an open mind have to admit, is not only a forceful but a witty critic. But there are evidently occasions when, like Saint Thomas before him, he feels the need of something more concrete than sweet persuasiveness.

WHAT ABOUT "THE NATION"?

IT IS possible to learn a great deal from "liberal" expression of opinion. The major portion of this potential deposit of knowledge is the fact that the "liberal" moves in a world he has hermetically sealed against outside influences—even such influences as are conveyed by ordinary news. An example comes to hand in an editorial entitled, What About the Catholics?, which appears in The Nation for January 26. Here are repeated precisely the same charges which the outstanding ignoramus of Senate history, Heflin of Alabama, read into the Congressional Record. To wit: the common people of the United States have united in protest against war with Mexico; the press of the world has denounced imperialism in Latin America; the sinister purposes of the oil barons have been circumvented—but Catholics, excepting for a bit of editorial opinion expressed in The Commonweal, have been silent or even guardedly bellicose on the subject of intervention. It is even suggested that the "revolt led by the Archbishop of Guadalajara" may have been financed by the Knights of Columbus fund. We can forgive Mr. Villard for having swallowed one of the biggest hoaxes ever saddled upon the reading public; but surely he must know that there is a million times more evidence to show that Mexican propaganda in the United States is bought and paid for than exists to indicate that a lonely country bishop obtained funds from Mr. Flaherty and his aides.

What really must be pointed out, however, is the circumstance that in its attitude toward the Mexican problem The Nation is really very much like the nation. Has there been no official, collective statement of Catholic opinion? Is there no way of telling where Catholics stand on the matter of Mexico? During November, 1926, Mr. William D. Guthrie, of the New York Bar, prepared for the American bishops a legal opinion on the problems created by the rule of Calles. This opinion has been published in full and quoted from widely. On page 46 of his pamphlet, Mr. Guthrie declared that "thoughtful Catholics will not endeavor by agitation, political or otherwise, to force the hand of our government." On the following twelfth of December, the Catholic Episcopate of the United States issued a pastoral letter—in itself an unusual event—on the religious situation in Mexico. On page 28 of this letter, copies of which were sent out as widely as possible and other copies of which are distributed at a nominal cost by those terrible Knights of Columbus who rasp the sensitive nerves of so many "liberals," these words are found: "Christian principles forbid the Church founded by the Prince of Peace to take up the sword or rely upon such carnal weapons as the inflamed passions of men would select." The letter went on to say that the episcopate made no plea for intervention or political action of any sort, and counseled all to believe and pray that justice would triumph in the end. These principles, moreover, were set forth by the Papacy in its declaration upon the Mexican situation, and repeated by the bishops of Mexico themselves.

In its issue dated December 29, The Commonweal made the following comment: "It is instructive to note to what a meagre extent the official American press has dealt with the pastoral letter, and to see how cautious its comment has usually been." We may now add the conviction that many persons who profess to feel an anxiety about the "Catholic stand" have not read it at all. And the reason why? Simple fear of the facts—fear of looking at this malignant thing which is Calles tyranny in Mexico, fear of considering it apart from all subterfuge of theory or doctrine, fear of being driven to the conclusion that this is a "damned thing." That is why a paper like The Nation—and ever so many other exemplars of American opinion—look so ridiculous to us. Catholics have declared where they stand, about as clearly, emphatically and reasonably as human words can declare anything. But where on earth is "liberal thought"? We do not want to be informed that "Mexico's war upon the Church is the natural outgrowth of the latter's history." In the first place that needs a kind of substantiation nobody is in a position to supply, and in the second place it is beside the point. We want to see the facts in the Calles case—facts of law which abrogate the concept of law; facts of brutal misrule which almost baffle belief; facts of political tyranny which deny the premises of all tolerant government—plainly summarized and confronted. We want to hear the verdict: right or wrong. Then we shall know where The Nation stands.

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GREAT HEARTS AND THOUGHTS

ADDRESSING the students gathered for the Newman Club convention in New York City, Mr. William D. Guthrie observed that a spiritual historian of the United States could record with satisfaction "the establishment and protection of religious liberty by constitutional guaranty, and the slow but as yet incomplete development of religious tolerance."

But he was forced to add that "whilst the Constitution guarantees religious liberty and the equal protection of the laws of all faiths alike in every state of the Union, there lies a great field beyond the reach of statutes, and that is the field of public opinion among our fellow-citizens of other faiths than Catholic. Therein lies your future task. I am not at all thinking of or contemplating conversions; I am thinking only of the intolerance, prejudice and antipathy in regard to the Catholic Church and Catholics, entertained by so many of those whom we meet daily in our lives, to whom we are attached, whom we respect and esteem, and yet who have inherited the point of view of ancestors who conscientiously and from deep conviction persecuted all whom differed with them on questions of religion and to whom everything Roman Catholic was anathema."

Those whom Mr. Guthrie was addressing were, for the most part, young men and women; and yet every one of them had probably encountered the same state of mind, the same hostile mental and social barrier, which the man talking to them had come to know during long, busy years of contact with the American scene. They were advised to remember Newman's "never-to-be-forgotten words —'Let the world see by your lives.' Hostile public opinion can be affected and ultimately removed only by example."

Going out from the centralized spiritual country of the Church into a world always more or less foreign and antipathetic, every Catholic is an ambassador whose motto must be noblesse oblige and whose habits those of a gentleman. Mr. Guthrie outlined in some detail the truth that this method of influencing public opinion has never failed, though every other method has. And beyond any question, his remarks have a great, abiding significance for Newman Club members who, like their fellow young men and women in Catholic colleges, represent in America that youth upon which all the spiritual forces active in the world are relying. It is well for them to recall from the period of carnage which they barely missed taking a stern share in, and which has markedly influenced the world they inhabit, the daily illustration of example supplied by French clerics serving in the trenches and enduring the multiform attacks of martial routine with no damage to their radiant personal morality and faith. What these men did for their country is by no means deducible from the sum total of political victory. To them is due, in a large measure, the restoration of the spirit now so evident in the social and artistic life of their nation.

But the distance between personal testimony and literary testimony is not so great as Mr. Guthrie seemed to believe. A written paragraph, whether creative or critical, is always a mirror of personality. And if this in turn be spiritualized and valiant, orderly and urbane, it matters very little whether the topic dealt with is as far removed as the pole from problems of apologetic or doctrine. Indeed, there is nothing to which the modern world is likely to listen so little as to tracts. It was brought up on them; it has torn them to bits or flung them away; and it is not apt to look around for a fresh supply. But the presence of nobleness in literature, the background of good poetry or prose that is a good man—this is as unmistakable and as cherished now as ever. It has its marvelous, beautiful effect, not merely upon the moral life of an individual whom it moves, but also upon that residue of intolerance which many of us retain as a cradle remembrance.

Perhaps this concept of the literary life—which in its own way "sublimely witnesseth"—needs to be drawn more emphatically to the attention of young men and women now trying out their gifts in the craft of prose and verse. That they feel no urge to engage in polemics or unctuous discussion, that they are moved rather by swift, strange notions of beauty, is not a fault, but a characteristic of their age. It is perhaps good that this is so. All of loveliness, Jacques Maritain reminds us in different words, is the greensward before the House of God. And so, we say with some feeling, there is no manner in which the young educated man or woman can so successfully be an exemplar, a witness, to his faith, urbanity and tradition as in the honest practice of the literary art. The circumstance that this has been, apparently, so little realized is one matter which The Commonweal, hospitable on principle to the young, has viewed with some concern.

But possibly we may be on the eve of new riches and a greater artistic "courtesy" than has been seen since the beheading of Thomas More. That is, at least, a hope which may pleasantly be entertained even while the random struggling of the present is encouraged.

If, to quote the words of Mr. Guthrie again, these young people can "let the world see in your lives high moral standards, high culture and high patriotism," there is little to fear even from the gusts of prejudice which rock the present from the waste spaces of the past.

For in the end, nation, humanity, church, and God, abide; and because the morning is always with them, youth which loves loveliness is sure to find its path.

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THE CALVERT SERIES

By MICHAEL WILLIAMS

IN THE first number of this journal, the statement was made that there was being promulgated throughout the world a theory, and a practice of the theory, of what civilization is, or what it should become, which if it proved successful meant the end of Christendom, at least so far as the expression or influence of Christian principles and ideas in the institutions of civilized life are concerned. And this journal stated that it was a spiritual and even a patriotic duty for those who believed in Christian principles to make an effort to apply their conserving and regenerative forces in opposition to the spread of the contrary set of principles. In the same number of The Commonweal, the late Mr. Stuart P. Sherman gave a name to the anti-Catholic philosophy—that of pagan hedonism. In a review of Anatole France, quoted by us, he said:

> Sometimes I am convinced—almost convinced—that nothing can finally resist the full seduction of the rising tide of pagan hedonism but the Petrine Rock. The Church of Rome and its champions still stand fast in their ancient faith. And they are pretty nearly the only powers which oppose to the point of view of Anatole France a definite point of view of their own. In France, Christian idealism has long been accustomed to formidable adversaries; its apologies are not, as generally with us, defenseless babes, going down helpless and speechless before the spears and banners of an overwhelmingly superior enemy. They study the invader: see him as Achilles, and find his heel; see him as Goliath, and plant their white pebbles between his eyes. The most searching criticism of Anatole France which has yet appeared, the best informed, the most appreciative and at the same time the most destructive, comes from French-Catholic writers, whom English popularizers plunder without acknowledgment, bearing to the English public the honey of their appreciation and leaving the sting of their criticism behind.

There is a particular reason for recalling what The Commonweal had to say in its first number, and the quotation from Mr. Sherman. For it was in The Commonweal, a little later on, that Mr. Hilaire Belloc expressed the idea which now is being partially realized—or, at least, is being tested as to its capability for realization—in that new library of small but potent books, The Calvert Series, edited by Mr. Belloc. The first four books of the new series have appeared.* Other volumes are promised.

In his article in The Commonweal, Mr. Belloc said:

> I wonder whether it would be worth anybody's while to organize at this stage of the great controversy in which the world is engaged, a series of short clear books upon apologetics suited to our time; not little tracts, of which we have, upon the Catholic side, a very large number—most of them excellent and enjoying an immense and increasing circulation—but books. We have individual examples which are of the first merit, and among these, I suppose, is that extraordinary little book on the Gospels, by Dr. Arundzen, which is the very best thing of its kind I have ever read. But there is something about a series which adds greatly to the value of its component units. Men take each work in it the more seriously because it is supported by its fellows in the regiment. Men are more likely to obtain a book which belongs to a series, than they are to obtain an isolated book in such a connection, and the books of the series help to sell one another. The time is ripe for such a thing, and if certain negative rules were observed, it could do nothing but good.
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> The time is ripe because the controversy between Catholic truth and its opponents has reached today, certainly in England, and the English-speaking dominions of the Crown, but still more, I believe, in the United States, a position comparable to that in the Mediterranean world a century before the conversion of that world. We are still a small minority, but we are the only body with something definite and permanent, continuous and unchanging, profound and multitudinous to say, and what we have to say answers the great questions which mankind is driven to put to itself. No one else provides an answer. Our opponents either have the intelligence to maintain the thesis that no answer is obtainable, or (the greater part of them) unintelligently support divers answers which experience has already shown to be ephemeral and of no value. Again, as in that time 1,700 years ago, we stand solid, while everything around us is in flux and dissolution.

This quotation from Mr. Belloc cannot be improved upon as a statement of the aims and purposes of the new series. It would be very difficult, indeed, for any writer to try to improve upon Mr. Belloc's explanations or definitions. The forceful clarity and expression of logical thought is the root of the matter in Mr. Belloc's style. Fortunately, a publisher was found who did think it worth his while to organize and publish such a series. We now have before us the first four books, and are in a position to estimate the practical value of Mr. Belloc's idea. If it is successful, Mr. Sherman's statement that English-writing Catholics are generally defenseless babes will be satisfactorily refuted. That Mr. Sherman's view is—or has been—a correct one has to be, I think, admitted. The editors of the Universal Knowledge Foundation—who are also editors of the Catholic Encyclopedia—and who are certainly authoritative on this question—have just issued a statement in which they unequivocally confess

**The Catholic Church and History, by Hilaire Belloc; The Catholic Church and the Appeal to Reason, by Leo Ward; The Catholic Church and Conversion, by G. K. Chesterton; The Catholic Church and Philosophy, by Vincent McNabb, O. P. The Calvert Series. New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.00 each.*

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that Catholics exercise little if any influence in the field of general literature. "This is for us a grave disadvantage and a grave disadvantage for the world at large. It makes us appear aloof from the life of the nation, as if sectarian, and in this respect alien, with little or no part in public affairs."

Mr. Belloc's own book, The Catholic Church and History, may properly be considered the foundation-stone of the series. Intelligent and educated readers, who at least have sufficient good will to try to continue their education so far as the Catholic Church is concerned—about which the majority even of highly educated and intelligent non-Catholics are so much in the dark—are perhaps more concerned with the objective facts, in a word, the history, of the Church in its relations with human society, than with any other aspect of the subject.

Individuals who for personal reasons become deeply interested in the question of whether the Catholic Church is indeed the truth, turn more to the study of its doctrines in relation to their own spiritual needs than to its public record; but even for such readers that public record is apt to be radically involved with the spiritual aspects of the Church. Inevitably so; for as Mr. Belloc himself begins his book by pointing out, the Catholic Church is not something vague, something simply "spiritual"; it is not an atmosphere or a mood; though indeed it has an atmosphere all its own, and as many moods as there are human souls. It is an objective institution. Mr. Belloc states the matter thus:

> By the term "The Church" I mean the Catholic Church; and by the Catholic Church I mean that visible society real, one, and clearly present before the world today, which is in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome, and accepts not only the supremacy of that see but also the infallibility of its occupant when, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, and speaking in that capacity, he defines a matter in faith or morals.
>
> The Church claims divine authority. She says: "I alone know fully and teach those truths essential to the life and final happiness of the soul. I alone am that society wherein the human spirit reposes in its native place; for I alone stand in the centre whence all is seen in proportion and whence the chaotic perspective of things falls into right order. Mankind cannot feed upon itself—for that is death at last. I alone provide external sustenance from that which made mankind. The soil of my country alone can fully nourish mankind. Here, in me, alone is reality. For I alone am not man-made but am of direct divine foundation and am by my divine Founder perpetually maintained."

Upon this foundation Mr. Belloc builds his book. He insists upon the point that he is not attempting a positive apologetic drawn from history in favor of the claim of the Church, but a rebutting of the evidence drawn from history opposed to this claim. He examines the value of the arguments drawn from history to prove that the Catholic Church has varied or erred in her teaching or has made it depend upon immoral methods, and he says that such arguments have no force. He divides his thesis into two parts, the first dealing with three arguments that might be termed moral arguments: first, that the Church has made pronouncements which history can prove to be false; second, that the Church has used material which she knew to be false; third, that the Church being proved to be not only organized but increasingly organized from the beginning of its existence, is thereby shown to be different from the simple thing which a divine institution of the sort should be. The second part of Mr. Belloc's thesis deals with the intellectual argument, namely, that the Church can be proved by history to be man-made, not God-made. This again is divided into two sections: first, the Protestant argument that the Church gradually corrupted the original message of Christ and from it has deviated; and, second, the general agnostic argument that the Church can be proved historically to be but one of many religions, to have grown up like any other religion, with the same illusions and similar rites and mysteries, and it is therefore man-made—which last form of attack the author regards as today the most serious.

This general thesis is maintained by Mr. Belloc in his most characteristically clear, strongly reasoned, vividly phrased fashion. No attempt is being made in this place to review his arguments. But it can be said without much fear of contradiction that whether or not intelligent, educated non-Catholic readers agree with him, that at any rate they will find presented for them in language consonant with their own mode of thought the Catholic position. It is a most admirable general introduction to the immense subject with which it deals. It does not attempt to deal with details; it goes to the root of the matter, leaving to sincere inquirers their own task of investigating doubtful cases, or inquiring into particular applications of the general principles so lucidly described by Mr. Belloc.

Mr. Chesterton's volume deals in its author's most brilliant fashion with the tremendous subject of conversion—namely, the phenomenon so strikingly evident in the world today of hundreds and thousands of men and women, born outside the Catholic Church, who are coming into it now. As Mr. Belloc says in his introduction to Chesterton's book:

> Such men and women converts are perhaps the chief factors in the increasing vigor of the Catholic Church in our time. The admiration which the born Catholic feels for their action is exactly consonant to that which the Church in its earlier days showed to the martyrs. For the word "martyr" means "witness." The phenomenon of conversion apparent in every class, affecting every type of character, is the great modern witness to the truth of the claim of the Faith; to the fact that the Faith is reality, and that in it alone is the repose of reality to be found.

Leo Ward's contribution to the series is, The Catholic Church and the Appeal to Reason. It deals with

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the fallacy so deeply rooted in the modern world outside the Catholic Church that there exists a natural antagonism between the Catholic system of thought and the conclusions, positive or negative, of the human reason working independently and dealing with problems of the universe in which it finds itself, and coming to its own final judgments irrespective of the authority of the Church. As the author says, the book is an essay rather than an argument:

> Any attempt to present an adequate argument for Catholicism in the space of 100 pages would indeed be an insult to the reader as well as an irreverence to the subject itself. The purpose of this little book is rather to suggest certain lines along which a non-Catholic student might profitably travel in order to gain a general view of the age-long controversial war which has been waged about the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church and Philosophy is dealt with by that trenchant and illuminated Dominican writer, Prior Vincent McNabb, who, with Father Martindale and Father Ronald Knox, is a proof of the fact that a priest who is a real writer can reach and interest the layman's mind even better than a lay writer.

If these four books and the fifth, which is now on the press—The Catholic Church and Its Reactions with Science, by Sir Bertram Windle—attract sufficient readers to warrant the continuance of the series, there will be a large number of other subjects dealt with by competent writers. Among the subjects suggested by Mr. Belloc himself, in his essay in The Commonweal, he mentions a few of the more important subjects. There will have to be, for example, a number of books dealing with questions of property, the guild system, what usury is, and why usury is wrong. There will be a book upon the doctrine of marriage.

There will have to be a defense of growth in Church usage, discipline, and form—called in an earlier generation, "development." As Mr. Belloc says:

> That last point is most important; for we need today a clear book explaining to everybody what not one man in ten outside our boundaries has grasped—namely, that the apparent novelty of Catholic practice proceeding in true lineage is no argument against its value or its essential foundation in truth. A living thing changes perpetually, but changes only within its norm. A rose puts forth new shoots, but they are the shoots of the rose. Our contemporaries fail on this point, I think, more than upon any other; and we also fail upon it, for we do not make ourselves clear to them.

And Mr. Belloc proceeds to outline a number of fundamental subjects in connection with the Catholic Church that require this method of clear explanation to those outside the Church whose minds are troubled by apparent but not real difficulties.

It would be useless to catalogue all the subjects that suggest themselves as being part and parcel of this general program. The main question remains, namely: Are Catholics sufficiently competent, so far as literary expression is concerned, to describe and to elucidate fundamental questions concerning the Catholic faith in a fashion that can be understood and appreciated by non-Catholics? A second question is connected with this first, which is: Are there a sufficient number of people outside the Catholic faith who are sufficiently interested in these fundamental questions to support such a series of books?

I do not know. Who can know? It remains to be seen whether or not Mr. Belloc's thesis is sound, and whether there is sufficient public interest in the fundamental questions suggested by the Catholic Church in its relation to the common weal to justify its continuance. This question can only be settled by American readers. An American publisher has issued this series of books, which is linked up with other series published by French, German, Austrian and English publishers, but which in a particular fashion, because of the name "Calvert" attached to it, belongs to American readers. It is at this point that it seems necessary to say that American readers, if they are to be tested, so far as their interest in Catholic literature is concerned, by their response to this very valuable series of books, are also entitled to an answer to a question which must be in many of their minds. Very reasonably they may ask why it is that a series of books entitled The Calvert Series should include to date nothing but English authors, and that no intimation has been given that American writers and American subjects are to be considered?

The intellectual expression of Catholicism is not a merely national fact. If there appears in England, France, Italy, Spain, or anywhere else, a writer competent to express in a fashion appealing to general readers throughout the world, the fundamental doctrines and ideas of the Catholic Church, well and good. But it does seem as if the contributions of the Catholic Church in America, particularly in the United States, and the problems which have to do with the development of faith in the United States, are of such significance that they should be recognized in a series of books published in the United States. We take it for granted that with the expansion of the series these American subjects and American writers will appear in due proportion. With this suggestion to the publishers and the editor of The Calvert Series, there is nothing left but to recommend most heartily and enthusiastically the first four books of the series already published, and to express the hope that American readers will prove that the editor and the publishers were not mistaken when they launched this enterprise.

Candles

Prayer and love and poetry
Are three candles burning on the same altar.
If a wind extinguishes one of them,
The other two blink and sputter for a while,
Then die silently, leaving the heart in darkness.

HENRY MORTON ROBINSON.

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DR. BAGLEY AND THE "MORONIC I. Q."

By FRANCIS P. DONNELLY

(The highly important subject dealt with in the following article is that system of mental testing which has come into vogue as a result of the problem of mass education. Those not familiar with pedagogical language may note that the "intelligence quotient," or "I. Q.," is the matter which various tests in use set out to determine, it being assumed that the sum-total of mental energy which any individual possesses is fixed by heredity and analogous factors. This I. Q. may be (it has also been assumed) set to work to its fullest capacity but cannot be increased.—The Editors.)

A TEACHER needs optimism more than does any other person in the world. A doctor has a limited number of patients and has a large supply of reliable and well-tested excuses for failure. A preacher has not his audience daily before him and can easily excuse lack of results. But a teacher has present every day and for the larger part of the year, a varied assortment of human natures, intellectually ill and mostly rebellious to mental hygiene and to doses of knowledge—and a teacher's already slender supply of excuses now threatens to grow more slender.

In his Determinism in Education, Dr. William C. Bagley has taken a vigorous stand against all Galtonians and mental Mendelians who assert that every student's native capacity is as definitely hereditary as the red in the hair. The mental testers have reared an Ossa of statistics, but Dr. Bagley plants firmly on the testers' bristling crest a higher and huger Pelion of statistics. And so there goes by the board one fine excuse of long-established efficacy to the teacher. The teacher's ready relief has always been, "Poets, you know, are born"; or in the more scientific terminology of our time, "If you are born with a moronic I. Q., a poor persecuted teacher cannot be blamed." Now, however, Dr. Bagley intervenes and holds that the I. Q. is not a constant. Yet even if that flattering unction can no more be laid to magisterial souls, who knows but what they shall be all the more optimistic, even after the loss of one good excuse? "Once a moron, always a moron," is not, after all, a very heartening slogan for a teacher.

The servants in the parable were endowed by their master with different initial capital. One had five talents, another two, another but one talent. They were praised or blamed on auditing-day, not for the amount of their capital, but for the yield on their investments. The dispute between great mental testers like Professors Terman and Thorndike, and Dr. Bagley who opposes them, has to do with the question whether the initial talents of the human mind are limited and unchangeable. The mental testers seem to hold that native capacity is initially of a definite potentiality which cannot be increased although that potentiality may be fully realized. That is to say, your talents may draw 100 percent interest, but you cannot increase your capital and you cannot compound your interest. A natural corollary to this position is that intellectual development ceases at a certain period. In the Catholic Educational Review for May, 1926, Dr. T. F. Foran examines all this evidence adduced so far to establish this corollary, and brings in a verdict of not proven. Modern Catos may still start at ripe old age to master Greek without being discouraged by the prospect that their talents have already been realized to their full capacity.

Dr. Bagley attacks this common assumption of testers that initial capacity is a constant. He calls the initial talent or intelligence level, the vertical; and the investment or development, the horizontal; and asserts against his opponents that mental levels may develop vertically as well as horizontally, and even that horizontal development produces vertical development. "It is now clear," he says, arguing from half-a-dozen different investigations, "that horizontal growth may bring about a significant access of vertical growth."

The opponents then have locked horns, and while the hereditarians are amassing statistics and carrying on tests to overcome Dr. Bagley, as they undoubtedly are trying to do, it would help to have both sides define their terms and search into their assumed first principles. "General intelligence" is a very vague term, differently defined by all authorities read during ten years by the present writer—from Binet and Simon down to Dr. Bagley, whose definition, "the ability to control behavior in the light of experience," is not very definite and introduces moral elements which are of the highest value but are not commonly styled intellectual. Is it certain, too, that control of behavior correlates always with intellectual power?

The definition stated in the army tests is the most honest: "By intelligence we mean the ability that manifests itself quantitatively in a set of consistent scores in all types of examination upon which our data is based." That is honest, because the only thing that is tested in any test is some operation, and that operation is rated by correlation with the ability of others to do the same operation. No one measures intelligence in any literal sense, but in reality he rates operations and infers to intelligence. You rate what you rate, and determine nothing directly but your rating; and if you proceed to draw inferences, you may go wrong in many different ways. "Rating" is in reality a more accurate term than measuring, because an operation cannot be measured. It has no halves or quarters, and is therefore not subject to measurement in its strict sense. You

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can merely say an operation is better or worse than another operation; you cannot say that it is half or quarter of an operation.

Now besides a clear notion of what is rated—namely, an operation—testers, or better, theorizers on tests should remember what is obvious: that the more elements enter into the operation, the more unreliable is the rating, and the more uncertain is the interpretation of the tested operation. Spelling and simple mathematical operations have an indeterminable amount of constituent elements, coöperating for their performance. The expert physicist may tell us all the factors that intervene in radio-transmission, between the voice that leaves the lips for the microphone, and the sound that issues from the amplifying horn. No analysis of the issuing voice will reveal the countless links in the radio chain. If the physiological and psychological factors are numerous in a simple operation like spelling, what will they be in English composition? That is a highly complex operation, and to establish a scale of rating is extremely difficult. Now go further with the testers and rate not only the operation, but the various known and unknown elements combining in the operation; and go still further beyond those elements to their causes in heredity, in environment, in formal schooling. You will then realize the Alps which mental testers must scale with the courage of Hannibal. They indeed scale—but do they find Italy?

Finally, as a preliminary to decide this controversy and to estimate the initial capital, the disputants should select the children immediately upon birth, subject them to exactly the same environment, and when they arrive at the Simon-Binet ages, give them the same tests, making sure that all the children are the same in everything except the one operation subject to test. Even then, Freud would hold there was some prenatal schooling. The tabula rasa, or clean slate, which the anti-Platonists describe as the first stage of education, is difficult to get at, and more difficult to analyze in order to determine which slate has the best qualities. Is the tabula rasa of child A of the same nature and excellence as the tabula rasa of child B?

Despite all these handicaps, the measuring of intellects has been carried on, and the intelligence quotient, or the ratio between years and intelligence, has been confidently announced for thousands of children. It is possible now to have your I. Q., marked on the frame of your door, and have your intellectual vertical lead-penciled on the line of your physical vertical. Your horizontal, both mental and corporal, will be found to vary more freely. The vertical, if you wish to be accurate, will be your Simon-Binet-Standford-Revision intelligence, or your Alpha intelligence or your Beta intelligence.

Dr. Bagley's authorities have been examining into this so-called native intelligence, and have been telling us strange stories about it. Burt finds that the Simon-Binet "native intelligence" is only one-third real native intelligence, and the rest trained intelligen trained in school. Willard agrees with Bu ing that half of the "native intelligence' schooling. White found the "silent re gence" improved by training, and concl determinist hypothesis that silent readi measure native intelligence—and it does r if native intelligence is a fixed quantity. goes against the testers, they don't theory; they give up the test. Grave coaching improved "native intelligence.' serts that, when placed in a superior en "native intelligence" is decidedly uplif studying the contents of Who's Who, de who test, which ascribes environment, e of the clergyman's home, as the best pro "native intelligence." Gordon, the English school-inspector, makes the still more astonishing assertion that the Simon-Binet-Standford-Revision "native intelligence" actually decreases, and the members of the same family have less "native intelligence" at twenty-two than they had at four. Gordon asks the very sensible question: "Is there any mental development apart from mental effort?" And all true Aristotelians who hold that education is a habit formed in a power by action, will answer with Gordon in the negative. Clark asserts that "native intelligence" is better if information is more extensive. Dr. Bagley is triumphant over this conclusion, which proves for him that the horizontal growth turns into vertical—for babes, of course, are not born with up-to-date information. "Native intelligence" is therefore variable in every way. It is shown not to be wholly native; it is increased; it is decreased; by training it approximates in ability a better intelligence; it is changed by information to formation.

Assuming that these several investigations are accurate and true, Dr. Bagley does well to hearten all teachers and to inspire them with the hope of bettering even morons. It is certain, divinely certain, that by taking thought, no one can add to his stature, because the physical vertical, happily for us all, is under control of glands beyond the power of thought. But we can, by taking thought, add to our mental stature. Living substance is more plastic than dead matter, and the very texture of muscle and flesh can be improved by use and care. How much more plastic is the substance of the mind, and to what marvelous levels of intelligence it can be raised! Even were the internal handicaps to thought as serious as was the loss of sight and hearing to Helen Keller, may not devoted teaching find a way into a resurrection and development of the mental life? Dr. Bagley, in his hopeful pronouncements, would seem to assume so. The educational world needs his insistent declaration that intellectual levels may be lifted; that Alpha, Beta, Simon-Binet or any other test, has no infallibility to predestine minds to intellectual loss of salvation.

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ALL SIDES OF A QUESTION

By GEORGE N. SHUSTER

THE question to be asked here is this: What do we have in mind when we talk of a Catholic literature? Nothing is more frequently referred to than this literature, and nothing means so many different things to so many different people. If church membership is made the basis of the definition, one soon finds it quite embarrassing to explain why certain doggerel verses or even ribald tales should be labeled with a religious adjective. If, on the other hand, you make expression of definite Catholic principle in the work a standard of definition, it soon becomes apparent that the word "literature" must be scaled down to almost nothing. Even such a poem as Francis Thompson's Hound of Heaven contains, in the final analysis, no point of view which a certain variety of dissenter might not easily have grappled to his soul. Finally, you may agree (with the present writer's quondam, hotly contested thesis) that the ultimate test is a certain way of looking at life—a conformity of mind with Christian tradition as opposed to varied modernisms—manifest in the literary work or its author. In this case it will be necessary, of course, to concede that many a page of sterling Catholic writing has been signed by persons who, in all likelihood, never dreamed of entering the Church.

Would it not, therefore, be the simplest way out of the difficulty to declare that literature is literature, and that the term "Catholic" ought not to be fastened to it? This idea is actually being recommended by many critics. " 'Why is Shakespeare more Christian and more genuinely a poet than Racine?' was a question Manzoni put to himself. Perhaps you suppose he answered by saying that there is a monk in Romeo and Juliet. No, he simply found that Shakespeare is more constantly and with greater intensity the poet of the depths of his own being." These words from a recent book by the Abbé Henri Bremond have a perfectly obvious implication (which is that religious externals are always externals) and another implication by no means obvious (which is that the tests of art are perennially different from the classifications of science or the categories of reason). The Abbé Bremond's method is really deadly to facile generalizations! But the point is made so well by Max Jacob, a poet of the first order even though he has not yet been appointed an ambassador, that I cannot refrain from quoting him at some length:

> European art, our art, is the art of the Christian era. The noblest crafts will be the handiwork of the noblest Christians, if they possess that intelligence of the Sacred Spirit which is a calm personality and a great love. I do not consider the hate of Léon Bloy, the little sensations of Huysmans, or the precise prettinesses of Verlaine equivalent to Christian art. If Jammes and Claudel are Christian artists, it is not because of their evident and often expressed piety. Indeed, I do not consider it necessary to speak of God and the Holy Mass in order to be a Christian artist. The seventeenth century is entirely Christian, even when it is atheistic: strength, renouncement, obedience, order, humility, poverty of the spirit, sobriety, chastity, respect—these are at once aesthetic virtues and Christian virtues. The apostolate is only a Christian virtue under the exceptional conditions of vocation; it is never an aesthetic virtue. Pagan influences have prostituted art during the past 100 years; the Christian virtues of some artists have meanwhile defended beauty against the barbarians. Modern works of literature or painting are barbarous only because they are the product of barbarians: I demand for them the Christian virtues.

If these questions were merely of academic interest, one might be satisfied to arrive at no conclusion about them. But the fact that right now every Catholic with literary gifts, whether creative or critical, must orientate himself by them, makes the whole problem poignantly practical. What answer shall the young poet or prose-writer give? We may suppose that the environment in which he has reached manhood has been definitely shaped by religious influences; he has a Catholic mind, and to a greater extent, perhaps, than he could tell you, he is interested in Catholic life. How shall he coördinate these personal things—these things which are, fundamentally, himself—with the ends of the craft which he hopes to practise and with the conditions prevalent in the world of literary production? It seems to me that this problem is at present studded with so many thorns, most of them imposed from the outside by people who know nothing of literature or art, that many a promising youngster gives up the battle altogether or else grows old nursing a grouch. On the other hand, the anarchy and anaemia resulting from confused principles deprive us of what everybody is clamoring for—vigorous Catholic life in the arts.

Now it so happens that in France, where there exists a great spiritual activity in letters, these fundamental difficulties have stirred up a great deal of talk. The place where this flows most freely is at the annual "literary week" which draws together scholars and poets, novelists and critics, who hold the Catholic faith in common and who therefore also have common difficulties and aspirations. This year the discussion brought to the fore a great many matters so pertinent to the problem under consideration here that I shall try to isolate a few of them. The first is criticism, important both because it requires so exact a statement of principle and because without good criticism great artistic creation is killed by misunderstanding and neglect. Such an amount of electricity was generated

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by this topic at the "literary week" that one is surprised to see how calm and discerning were the conclusions drawn by the Abbé J. Calvet: that critics, while loyally and frankly adhering to their convictions, ought to guard against soft habits of unctuous flattery and *also* against the practice of launching broadsides of virulent abuse into the world.

Do these conclusions mean anything to the United States? Well, consider what appears to be the fashionable attitude of certain popular critics. They almost invariably begin by declaring that there is too much timidity, too much concession to current aberrations, on their side of the fence. Menckenism—that is, the broadax habit—they clamor for, and then proceed to tumble into the perennial abyss of all partisan criticism: the practice of denying every merit to those with whom they disagree, and of oiling with extravagant praise the works of their cronies and confrères. Thus there is manifested a threefold deadly error. In the first place, the problem is not at all the style of Mencken, but whether or not one is a genuine critic. It so happens that criticism means, if anything, the reaction of a civilized mind to what is presented to it for consideration. And most of us rightly take for granted that the advance of civilization means getting farther away from the cave and its club, nearer to the discrimination, the urbanity, the delicate irony, the charity of great minds. If the writer of a book cannot feel certain that he is going to meet with civilized criticism, why should he try to write for civilized minds? I remember seeing a review of a very good book by a Catholic on a Catholic subject of first-rate importance. The critic was hurt by a phrase on one page of the volume; and his notice consisted entirely of two paragraphs of abuse thrust at the phrase. Verily there is some reason for hearkening to the Abbé Calvet!

But there is a second dire aspect of the error. One need not agree with the tirades launched by Huysmans against art in which the reality of beauty is "satanized" to hold, with the scholastics, that every artist is gifted in a singular mystical fashion which may be of divine origin. How, then, can one dare to refuse recognition to the beautiful achievement of a writer whose formal view of life and morals is different from our own? There are wrong notions in Shelley which for the most part are also laughable notions; but there is a censer that swings with the spontaneous rhythm of the earth itself, and the face of an acolyte. What invariably happens when criticism clenches its fist against beauty and mystical insight is that these things die and with them literature. You get instead the amorphous automatons which freeze the soul—the lifeless clatter of conventionalized details and unsounded characters, of copied pianissimos and farcical andantes, of books with a moral and of books without anything but a moral. It is a serious form of scepticism to deny the luminous in the work of man.

And the third error? Isolation—the ghetto-like retreat from the scene of action into a little nook where there is no danger of being disturbed. Will anybody really pay attention to your unreasoned tirades? I wager that William Lyon Phelps (who is not a notable critic but who retains the secret of cheerfulness) sells more books annually than any two other critics now living in the United States. Apart from all reasons of right and wrong, Catholic opinion should be restrained by mere prudence from manifestations of towering rage. "It makes us appear aloof from the life of the nation, as if sectarian, and in this respect alien, with little or no part in public affairs," declares the Reverend John J. Wynne in a recent manifesto. "It renders us unable to influence public opinion, to make known the sound principles and traditions we possess, and to impress these deeply on multitudes who would derive benefit from them even if they should never adopt our religion." One could draw an excellent analogy from those novels of Sienkiewicz which set forth the achievements of Pan Michael and Pan Longin. The first was a brave little man and a master of fence; but when it came to titanic tasks like striking off the heads of three Tartars at one fell swoop, he promptly turned the matter over to Pan Longin, whom nature had hugely fitted for the job. In a country like the United States, Catholics are in a minority. They may profit by adroit mastery of fence and appropriate bravery, but tremendous problems must be turned over to general public opinion. That means knowing how to influence public opinion.

Since this can only be a brief paper, I shall pass on rapidly to the no less engrossing problem of creative writing, abandon the poets to their varied anthologists, and note that the French "literary week" assembled novelists whose names have an international ring—Bourget, Baumann, Bertrand, Bazin. Did these come into being by a fortunate accident, quite independently of public circumstance or the conditions of the book-trade? No, indeed. They appeared and waxed strong, first because there is a French-Catholic audience which (on the testimony of M. Thibaudet) "reads much," and secondly because they stood firmly for their rights as novelists. They saw what prose fiction could do, and what prose fiction could not do; and they proceeded to use their heads. Now in the United States there is really only one Catholic reading public—a highly cultivated group of men and women interested in spiritual reading. A book addressed to them is always pretty sure of success, and that is a commendable fact. In the final analysis, however, Thomas à Kempis and Père Gratry are not literary figures, but religious teachers to whom writing was a vocation. The modern writer, as an artist and a critic, must look for a different public—a public interested in his product. This does not exist, and the reason is neither ignorance nor poverty (as is so often supposed) but the unfortunate identification of Catholic art with apologetics. Must a novel stress a point or a moral? The answer is very simple: a good

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novel cannot demonstrate a thesis. One mere glance at the history of letters reveals the fact that fiction "with a purpose" is all more permanently deceased than the works of Scaliger. Neither history, nor ethics, nor arguments can make a great prose story. It is always the product of life and poetic vision.

Life and poetic vision! It seems to me that never before in the history of Christendom could a man or woman dedicate life to these two with so much confidence and glorious zeal. Listen to these recent remarks by Paul Claudel:

> We have been liberated from the slavery of the spirit in the presence of matter, from the fascination of quantity. We know once more that we are made to dominate the world, not to be dominated by it. The sun has swept into the sky anew, we have thrust the curtains aside, and we have thrown out the window the plush furniture, the bibelots of the bazaar, and the "pallid bust of Pallas." We know that the world is indeed a text and that it tells us, humbly and gayly, of its own nothingness but also of the eternal presence of Another.

Ours is, in all truth, a time when life courses once again in the veins of the spirit. No dark terrors such as haunted our fathers, of science that would destroy the foundations of belief in a night or of paganism that could engulf all spiritual citadels, oppress our minds. But our vitality finds no artistic outlet. We are enchained in our own formalisms and inveterate habits. Our books are dull and asleep; our young men follow other gods. And these things will be so until we face the problem of literature squarely and tell ourselves what it is.

Perhaps I should add that this paper is necessarily a personal view. It could have been supported by elaborate testimony from many sources. But if what has been said proves at all interesting, there will be plenty of substantiating material. This is earnestly invited. Meanwhile it may be well to remember that the past ten years have been remarkable for the development of interest in the culture which is a product of faith. Perhaps the masters of an older day were greater. But in many places, especially among women and in schools conducted by religious women, there is now visible a growing eagerness, a clearer discernment, a great tact in the presence of art.

A POET OF SOUL AND SEX

By CHARLES PHILLIPS

NOTHING has been more frequently remarked in recent discussions of Europe and its post-war reconstruction, than the phenomenon of the peasant. Whatever "self-determination" may or may not mean, this fact is established: that the peasant, especially the peasant of eastern Europe, has, since the world war, come into a place and a power not dreamed of before. He votes and holds office and sits in the halls of legislature—in Poland he has even occupied more than once the prime minister's chair.

This phenomenon, while pleasing to the lovers of democracy, has nevertheless raised serious questions at times in the minds of the friends of liberty. In what degree, they have asked, is the peasant fitted for self-government? Is it safe to entrust so much to his untrained hands? He is a tyro at the arts of economics and government; for one thing, he manifests a ponderable slowness in grasping the idea of taxation—and there is danger in that.

But the study of the peasant has brought some surprises. To the astonishment of most of us we have discovered, while we discussed this son of the soil in his relation to government, that already, and long ago, he has demonstrated his right to a place among the literati. In the art of letters he is no longer a tyro, but a master tried and proven. Take Poland alone: the greatest poet of modern Poland, the recently deceased Jan Kasprowicz, late dean of the College of Letters in the University of Lwow, the man who gave Polish literature her best translations of Shakespeare and Shelley and other English masters—was a peasant, one who rose directly from the soil. Reymont, to whom was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1925, was also of peasant stock. So likewise the greatest of Poland's living writers today, Stanislaw Przybyszewski (pronounced Shib-e-shevsky) is of peasant origin.

Now, anyone who has read Reymont's epic of the soil, The Peasants, and his equally searching Promised Land, which is a study of the peasant transplanted from the soil to the industrial centre, knows this—that the story of the peasant is a tragic one; and that his tragedy is in his transplantation from the soil. Whatever it may be that his fresh veins draw from the turned furrow or that his soul apprehends in the mysteries of the fructifying earth and the shadowy horizon of forests that forever circles his hard-won fields, the peasant unquestionably develops a nature that is profoundly sensitive, deeply philosophical, and thus essentially tragic. He is forever asking and wondering. And when he lifts himself out of the rut of his narrow little thatched domain, and ventures into the sophisticated world, he goes almost mad with the puzzle of life.

Przybyszewski did just this. With a true peasant's soul in him, profound and sensitive, he ventured as it were from the reedy pond of his native Polish prairie out onto the high seas of the world, the world of

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Berlin and Krakow and Warsaw. And the swirling cross-currents and tidal undertow of that world, driving him onward and drawing him down, brought him to the verge of something very like a madness. For years, chartless and unpiloted, he swept along his tortuous way, bewildered, questioning, crying out, rising and falling, lost. Today we read in the newsprint of his conversion to the Catholic faith. He has at least found a star to steer by, whether he be yet in peaceful waters or not.

The return of Przybyszewski to the Church is an epochal event in European letters. Not since the Italian Papini, after years of iconoclasm and anarchy, came back and gave the world his Storio Christo has so important a conversion been recorded. But one must understand the position that Przybyszewski occupies in old-world literature to appreciate the full meaning of his acceptance of the Faith.

For a quarter-century, Stanislaw Przybyszewski has been a leader of the "young" thought of eastern Europe; not alone of his native Poland, but of Germany and Russia as well. As journalist, essayist, critic, novelist, he has wielded a distinct influence; and above all it must be noted that he has used effectively that most potent of all popular forms of literary expression, the drama, to propagate his ideas. His plays, despite the fact that they are never in the "popular" vein (any more than, for example, Eugene O'Neill's are in America) are among the established pieces of the modern theatre in Europe; and they are of double importance in that, influencing the minds of the masses who see them, they have influenced also, and even more markedly, the dramatists and the drama itself. "There is no action in my plays," Przybyszewski has said, "for I concern myself only and solely with the life of the soul." But the fact of the matter is, there is action in his plays, action of the most moving and compelling nature, the action of repressed emotion, as anyone realizes even in reading his texts. On the stage this action, subjective though it be, comes out in dark and vivid coloring. It has colored a good deal of the modern social drama of Europe.

The soul, then, is this artist's concern. And he possesses an uncanny power of probing the souls of his characters and of awakening in his readers and his auditors a consciousness of soul-existence that is profoundly disturbing. But why disturbing?

Heretofore, in the philosophy of Przybyszewski the soul has manifested itself in but one function, the function of human love. An atom whirled through a blind cosmos, the soul, as he has seen it, is but a part of a vast consuming, devouring, and self-multiplying whole, the full essence of which he expresses in the one word sorrow. "To this love which is sorrow all comes and from it all proceeds." Thus interpreted, love and life can mean but one thing, sex. Sorrow and sex, then, have been life to this profoundly disturbing poet. "Love is the disturbing consciousness of an unknown and frightful force which throws two souls together in the endeavor to fuse them into one; it is the ineffable consciousness of a fathomless depth, the sense of a psychic abyss, within whose depths are found the life of unnumbered generations and of the untold centuries of sorrow which humanity has endured to perpetuate itself."

This is the "exalted pessimism" which, as Przybyszewski's French critic Lucien Bourguès points out, was the inspiration of Nietzsche and Tchekhov and Ibsen and Schopenhauer; and it is to their school that the Polish writer has most belonged, independent and individual as he has at all times remained. The above paraphrase of his philosophy of life and love, drawn from his volume of essays, The Path of the Soul, sums up his whole scheme of thought. Sex is the core of that thought, and in none of his writings is this set forth more compellingly than in his drama, Snow, the only one of his works to be translated into English. Snow may be taken as a key to Przybyszewski's pre-conversion writings. In his even more successful drama, The Golden Fleece, originally produced in 1901, he depicts woman as the one fatal desire of man, the one thing for the possession of which man, driven on by a blind and nameless momentum, will sacrifice all, even honor and life. In his novel, Homosapiens, he portrays man destroyed by the obsession of sex; in The Children of Satan, he occupies himself once more, wholly and entirely, with the havoc of sex in the soul of man. And so also in that work ironically called For Happiness, he reveals man ruined and deprived of every hope and possibility of happiness through what seems to him the uncontrollable force of sex. But in Snow, more pointedly than in any other of his writings, he not only shows man and woman both crushed by the iron fist of the "frightful force," but he reveals himself as the searcher, the prober, the frustrated questioner:

> The heart was dried up, like shavings of wood. The soul was wounded. . . . Only your everlasting questions as to the cause and purpose of life, the riddle of being and not being, the seeking for something that can't be had and which doesn't even exist. . . . Can't you understand the yearning of a man who has always lived in the filth and loathsomeness of life? I wanted to seize the will-o'-the-wisp which flies above the morass of life.

It was this profound unrest, this insatiable want, this endless questioning that drove Przybyszewski to what I have called the almost-madness of his most famous writings. But if he wrote as he did, he never became, never could become, such a thing as we unhappily produce at times in our native theatre, a mere "sexy" producer of pornographic thrillers. If he was a throw-back to the phallic Greek, at least he preserved the pure intent of the earliest of the unspoiled Hellenic poets. Even the most degraded characters of his fictions are always the victims of a vast universal passion

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rather than mere libertines given over to indulgence and lust. Przybyszewski, judged solely by his writings, is seen always as the bewildered seeker after light, even though he makes—as indeed he invariably pictures man as making—his own darkness. He has been himself "the powerfully powerless soul" that he has depicted, the soul self-poisoned and self-dismayed.

But this was his nature—to suffer and to ask. Even in his early youth we find him, while he is studying medicine in the Berlin polytechnicum, composing his first treatise on The Microscopic Structure of Cerebral Covering. Since then his whole life-work has been a dissective process. But, to balance his mind, to keep him sane, he had music. He is not only an accomplished musician, but perhaps the foremost of the critical interpreters of Chopin, that great countryman of his who, if not a peasant like Przybyszewski, nevertheless drew his best inspiration and wove the fabric of his finest textures from peasant life. This balance, this cultivation of his sense of rhythm, coupled with the delicate dissective nature of his mind, are the factors that perhaps account most for the perfection of Przybyszewski's diction. In Polish, the most flexible of all the Slavic languages, he is acknowledged not only as a master, but even a magician. And this is all the more to be remarked when it is recalled that, born in the "German" Poland of pre-war times (in the same year that Reymont was born in "Russian" Poland, 1868) and educated in German schools, he did all his earlier writing in the alien tongue.

It was not until he moved to the ancient Polish capital, Krakow, the centre of Polish intellectual and artistic life, in 1898, that he began to be an influence in his home country. There, founding the journal Life (Zycia) he became the spokesman of the "young" revolt of the time, the leader of the symbolists, the supreme apostle of individualism. To Warsaw in 1900; and from then on, growing in power and influence, he has become recognized in Europe, in Germany, France, and Russia, as well as in Poland, as an arresting and disturbing power.

But always he has been the peasant soul, primitive in force, mystically attuned to creation, puzzled and bruised by life, disturbing because he has been himself forever disturbed. In Snow he poses the age-old question of life over and over, in a dozen different ways. But in Snow also we hear him confuting his own dictum that "death is the only remedy" for the boredom of life, uttering the ringing phrase, "A man who fights, who slaves, who wears himself out in bloody struggle to achieve the unobtainable, is beautiful." Only the strong know how to conquer themselves, he cries, as if challenging his own weakness and his own despair. Now, it would seem, he has found his own strength and has indeed conquered himself. "Art is the revelation of the soul," he has written; all previous art, all realistic art, was marked by the absence of the search for the soul. He has found his own soul.

To the Catholic, hearing of Przybyszewski's acceptance of the Faith, the thought inevitably comes that, through it all, he must indeed have possessed a soul dear to God, given at long last, the starlike surety it has so hungered after. Something his peasant forbears, walking their plowed furrows with bare feet, but with their earth-soiled hands in the Hand of God—something they bequeathed him and kept alive in him, to win him back to the sound faith of their childlike hearts. What processes he passed through to reach this end we can easily guess. The story is told in his writings. They reveal a soul too fine to go down, too strong to give up; a true peasant soul, primitive in its appetites, yet healthy enough to throw off the poison of the flesh and rise above the earthly mysteries of procreation to an apprehension of the spiritual mystery of the Creator Himself.

COMMUNICATIONS

PORTRAIT OF A PRELATE

Oklahoma City, Okla.

TO the Editor:—I have just received your telegram and answer it as follows:

His name is Francis Orozco y Jiminez. His title is Archbishop of Guadalajara. His city is the second largest in Mexico and the diocese comprises the state of Jalisco. The cathedral is probably the third in size and beauty. It comes after Mexico City and Puebla. The state of Jalisco is one of the strongest Catholic sections of Mexico. An overwhelming majority of the people are very pious and very faithful. The former seminary was a building of remarkable beauty with a magnificent library It was seized in early revolutions and the library scattered. During the Carranza revolution the new seminary was seized also, and during the present revolution another was taken.

The Archbishop is a tall ascetic-looking man, very quiet but very friendly. He comes of Spanish stock although like his parents he is a native-born Mexican. His family was always prominent and quite wealthy. His sister, now dead, was the wife of a prominent French-Mexican merchant, one of the wealthiest men in the republic. Archbishop Orozco was consecrated Archbishop of Chiapas and he busied himself not only with his spiritual work, but also with improving the condition of his cathedral town where he was responsible for the building of one of the large public utilities. His prevailing characteristic is generosity. He spent what private fortune he had and made marked improvements everywhere. To see and talk with him one might be tempted to imagine that he is too polite and kind to be firm, but he is bravery and firmness itself. When the Carranza revolution began the persecution of religion, the Archbishop was in Rome. He started at once for Mexico but was not permitted to enter and came to Chicago and lived there in my house for more than two years, always keeping in touch with his diocese and really governing it from a distance. He had his office and secretary at the residence of the chaplain of Columbus Hospital where he often attended the sick. In my parish he took over the spiritual care of the Sisters who taught in the parochial schools, saying Mass for them every morning.

One evening when I returned from the office of the Extension Society, he met me at the door of his room and told me he was going to Mexico. Fearing that the revolutionists would kill

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him, I protested but he said, "Everybody does not know as much about the situation as you and you know that all the Mexican bishops would gladly have remained or would go back if it were possible. You know that they did not leave of their own accord. I have heard that some people think that we are cowards and that if we were American bishops we would stay and be martyred. Some one of us must show the truth by an action. I can be spared so I am going back to Mexico."

Nothing I could say would change him. He promised to take care of himself as well as he could. He went to Mexico disguised and got as far as Aguas Calientes by rail. From that point he struck out on foot to reach the mountains of Jalisco and reached them safely. The Indians watched for the soldiers and warned him when they were coming. For much of the time he lived in a cave but when he got a chance he went to the houses of priests in the Indian country and in each place he gathered some of his clergy around him and had them make their retreats with him. He preached the retreats himself. This went on for about eighteen months. The Governor of the state withdrew the soldiers who were chasing him and sent word that he would not be arrested and therefore would not need to remain in hiding. Believing this story, he went to Los Lagos where he gave confirmation and participated in a ceremony at the Shrine. In the evening the soldiers came with a warrant from Governor Dieguez—who had sent word that he would be safe—and arrested him. When he was lodged in jail there was a turmoil amongst the people and the Archbishop feared bloodshed. He suggested that they should take him out the back door of the jail and away to some other place to avoid a disturbance. He was put in a freight car which was filled with soldiers under the command of General Delara, who occupied a private car on the same train, and taken to Tampico. But on the way he had a lawyer who visited him take out a writ of amparo. As the revolutionary government by this time had set up civil courts, this action caused consternation for it was intended to deal with him through the military. In the jail at Tampico he was threatened with death if he did not withdraw his appeal to the civil courts. He refused, and in the meantime the foreign consuls kept watch on the case. Fearing publicity, the government did not dare to kill him. They had a proclamation printed calling for a revolution, with his name on it, and threatened that if he did not withdraw the appeal they would publish it. He withdrew the appeal and the government sent him to the border. He went back again some months later. He went to Jalisco and was received in triumph by the people. In the meantime the government had seized his house and turned it into municipal offices. He got another and one night a bomb was exploded under the window of his sleeping-apartment, but it just happened that he was in the country that night. He had to leave that house and rent another. The new one was completely surrounded by other buildings so that blowing it up was out of the question.

The revolutionists hate and fear the Archbishop because of his popularity and his bravery. He went about publicly and even once was arrested for wearing a clerical costume on the street while he was passing from the door of his house to a carriage. In spite of his bravery he would never agree to do or say anything that might stir the people up and thus cause bloodshed, although time and time again he has put his own life in jeopardy. He is willing to shed his own blood but will not let the people shed theirs for him.

FRANCIS C. KELLEY.
Bishop of Oklahoma.

MEXICO'S PROBLEM

Washington, D. C.

TO the Editor:—President Calles is either extremely clever or he is very ably advised from the United States.

Arbitration of the material issues between Mexico and the United States appeals strongly to all Americans opposed to war. Acceptance of the principle of arbitration by Calles and an arbitral award satisfactory to both sides would isolate the question of religion and leave it unsolved, together with the fundamental question of the Mexican constitution.

Mexican constitutions all bear in them the basic error of partisanship. They were drawn by parties, for the preservation or for the restriction of definite things. They were drawn, not by people with practical and inherited knowledge of self-government, but by descendants of the feudal system of Europe—some still feudal in their convictions, others fired by the philosophies of the French Revolution, and tinged by the anti-religious features of those philosophies. Of democratic thought, of understanding of self-government in the sense that these were understood by the founders of the United States, there was not a trace. A further complication was added by the federal form given to the "United States of Mexico" in imitation of our own, regardless of the fact that Mexico was and is essentially a unit, while the colonies in North America were well-developed and independent communities which banded together after independence, as a federation, for definite purposes which each state was unable to accomplish alone.

A new, liberal, constitution is what Mexico needs; a constitution fitted to its needs, not a mere imitation of any other constitution no matter how well it may have worked for other people. It is not certain that in their hundred years of independence the majority of Mexicans are ready for complete self-government or anywhere near ready; in drafting a new constitution, due consideration should be given to the possibilities of the far future and as ample present safeguards provided as may be humanly possible for the rights of a backward majority.

That is a program for the Catholic party in Mexico, notwithstanding present difficulties. It is to be feared that Americans cannot be very helpful in the realization of such a program, for we are neither liked nor trusted in Mexico, by any party, and that with good reasons. We have constitutional lawyers of world-wide reputation, whose prestige would ensure American confidence in the labors of a drafting commission. There are equally widely-known jurists in South America whose presence might help to offset the taint of North American imperialism; there are also very practical experiences to be drawn on in Belgium where the Catholic party has demonstrated the compatibility of liberalism with Catholic thought in government.

Such a program with the majority of Mexicans behind it (and Catholics constitute the majority) would attack Mexico's problem at the root.

WILLIAM FRANKLIN SANDS.

CRITICS AND MR. CHESTERTON

New Haven, Conn.

TO the Editor:—It was only recently that an acquaintance of mine in Yale College, a witty young gentleman who has just been chosen Chairman of the Yale Record for 1927, said to me, "I have finally met your friend Father ————. And the way philosophy rolled from his tongue, really, I was awed. But I'll tell you a secret scandal: he still thinks Chesterton is important." I was silent, and he continued, "Now

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really, why don't you admit it, Chesterton was a delightful prep-school thrill, and that's all?"

Now in its issue of January 26, The Commonweal carries a letter from Mr. Cuthbert Wright, reiterating his opinion that Mr. Chesterton as an intellectual force is dead. The incidentals of his quarrel with The Commonweal editor (who, by the way, slipped into the same alliteration that he found "out of place" in Chesterton, when he unjustly imputed to Mr. Wright a "bitterness" that "is always ultimately bile") are not of significance. Stripped of his desire to bathe his injured feelings in The Commonweal's blood, Mr. Wright's opinion that "it is many a long year since any critic of serious pretentions has given a thought to Mr. Chesterton at all" reveals a condition of mind strangely akin to that of the breezy Record chairman-elect. Perhaps not sophomoric—but shall we not at least say a trifle broad—a condescending dismissal of Mr. Chesterton as "a third-rate and superannuated writer"?

The crux of the matter, it would seem, lies not in Mr. Chesterton's style (which has suddenly "become a bore" to many people besides Mr. Wright, though not infrequently they admired it in the essay class back in '10) but rather in the gradual development of Mr. Chesterton's viewpoint from that of a clever logician making mince-meat of a thousand little modern idols, into that of a very earnest, though still clever, Christian apologist. It may indeed be true that the "tattered rhymester" of 1905 might judiciously have clipped somewhat his style's curly locks when he put on the theologian's gown. That is a debatable matter. But it is not in the least debatable that a man who clears his mind of the Ten Thousand Amusing Errors in favor of One Truth concomitantly clears from his audience such "critics of serious pretensions" as Mr. Wright, and—the 1927 Yale Record chairman.

Our serious critics, it would seem, are remarkably timid about being serious in any matter that matters. And when a mystical democrat like Mr. Chesterton throws off the Merry Andrew's cap and bells, to remind the serious critics of what they should have known long ago, to wit that Father Brown is something besides Innocent, that The Napoleon of Notting Hill carries a meaning about patriotism, that Lepanto was more than an exercise in onomatopoeia and the inspiration for The Congo, and that a paradox can be, not merely a bed of coals over which to bake a trifle of witty soufflé, but a searing fire to illuminate the darkness of commonplace prejudices and make the Word of God shine forth—when he does this, then, Mr. Chesterton "becomes a bore."

But the serious critics are very serious about something. What is it? Oh, perhaps Aldous Huxley's neurasthenic masterpiece, Antic Hay; or Ronald Firbank's peccant masterpiece, Prancing Nigger; or that masterpiece of the immensely trivial bon mot, Norman Douglas's South Wind. And Mr. Chesterton is "a bore."

Well, it is Mr. Wright's privilege to be bored. Since America took the side-road out of Protestantism into paganism, anyone who turns the other way to find Christ in Christianity will inevitably impregnate his work with an ideal incompatible with that of a Jurgen, a Ulysses, or even a Babbitt; and his work will surely be judged adversely by those critics to whom Christ's divine religion has come to be an object of scorn. I don't feel that that is necessarily Mr. Wright's position; but I fear it is the position of most people who only discovered that Mr. Chesterton was a bore in the moment that Mr. Chesterton discovered Christ.

HARRY MCGUIRE.

MARY'S LITURGICAL COLOR

Waxahachie, Texas.

TO the Editor:—Recently in The Universe, the great English Catholic weekly, there appeared several letters upon the use of blue vestments for Our Lady's feasts. In Spanish countries it is an age-old custom and special privilege to do so, and the portent of these communications was to arouse interest among English-speaking Catholics for an extension of the same practice to the whole world.

Volumes beyond number have been, are being, and will be written for all time to come upon the graces, prerogatives and mercies of Our Blessed Lady; consequently it is not necessary in this present communication to dwell upon the indisputable position Our Lady occupies in God's providence or the reasons why she so deserves special honor. Hers certainly is an individual prerogative and a unique position and why should we not distinguish and emphasize the same by employing for her feasts a special liturgical color?

White, for her purity, is certainly appropriate, but it is also used on many an occasion and feast that is not in the remotest connected with Our Lady. Let her have a peculiar and special color all her own, the heaven's very blue itself, which her dignity and position demand.

The greater part of the Catholic world, geographically speaking at least, uses blue for the liturgical color on Mary's feasts. Some may retort that this is a Spanish custom, but it's high time Catholics in this country lost that Protestant engendered antipathy toward everything Spanish. It's worse than a relic of provincialism to disparage things Spanish in this day of such world-wide dissemination of knowledge and enlightenment, yet how much crass ignorance is displayed amongst even our very own when Mexico, South America, the Philippines or the Antilles are mentioned in discussion, or worse still, when a defense of the Church in the country first mentioned is attempted.

No one who has ever seen the beautiful vestments that Spain and Spanish America use on the feasts of Heaven's Bright Queen but carries away with him an indelible memory of the same and longs for an extension of this beautiful privilege to the whole world. From the twelfth century down to the Protestant Reformation, which so completely blighted that delicate and beautiful flower of English piety and devotion to the Holy Mother of God, blue was a popular liturgical color in Mary's Dowry. In our own country in the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Florida this beautiful color dignified the celebration of Our Lady's festivals until after the American occupation when French bishops and priests superseded the old Spanish and Mexican missionaries.

In twenty republics in the Americas, blue today is the color of the vestments and why can it not be the same in the twenty-first, namely our own United States? Not only is Mary Immaculate our patroness but our patronal feast day is that of her Immaculate Conception—certainly both facts are all the more conclusive why she should be especially honored here.

Rome's permission can be elicited by our bishops petitioning for the same, and such action can be brought about by a deep and concerted interest on the part of Mary's clients and children throughout this country. Not a one of us but has received of her mercy; loyal children of a loving Mother then should strive to have some special honor shown the giver and certainly a people's love and devotion could manifest itself in no more appropriate manner.

REV. JOSEPH G. O'DONOHOE.

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THE PLAY

By R. DANA SKINNER

Sam Abramovitch

HERE is a play, presented by Anne Nichols, which fared rather badly at the hands of the critics; which, in a measure, deserved this failure, and yet is imbued with a fundamental sincerity and truthfulness distinctly meriting a counter-current of praise and tribute. It has a stirring and poignant first act, and many moments in the last two which, if they could only be knitted together, would make distinguished drama. It suffers in the main from an attempt to be both realistic and allegorical, colloquial and biblical—in short, from an incongruity between its own elements.

It tells, in seven scenes, the epic of an idealistic Jew, whose wanderings bring him to this land of promise, whose ability brings him success, and whose faith in his God is then tried, like a modern Job, by death, destruction of fortune, and the treachery of friends. It closes with the promise of a life to be thrice blessed. Our first glimpse of Sam Abramovitch is in his Dresden garret. Then we see him visit his professor at the university in the hope of obtaining assistance for himself and his wife. The professor, instead of putting his idealistic teachings into practice, sends Sam and his wife back to the street. Then there is the departure from the Dresden station at night, the parting with wife and children, and the hope of what a new world will bring.

After this, we see Sam welcoming his wife a year later at Ellis Island. We see him starting up the material ladder in a successful clothing business, and with dreams of success in Wall Street—success always for the single purpose of using his wealth to alleviate the sufferings of others. Fifteen years later, this success is his. But his partner goes back on him, escapes with half the firm's funds, leaving Sam to make good personally the losses to clients on a disastrous oil venture. At the same moment comes the death of Sam's only son. Sam takes his trials erect. His faith remains, and his hope. When he sells everything he has, to pay his debts of honor, one feels that a new and still finer life is beginning for him.

The play is by François Porche, a Frenchman, and has been adapted into English by Charlton Andrews, and, one fears, none too well adapted. Many long passages are in blank verse, which only accentuates the biblical character of Sam, and brings a note of unreality, particularly to the scenes in modern New York. It is a play whose symbolism would be quite as clear, in fact much clearer, if treated simply and without pretentiousness. The blank verse throws a terrific burden on the shoulders of Pedro de Cordoba, who takes the title rôle. In general his characterization is excellent, sincere and flowing in action, at times finely vigorous; but what actor can hold the credulity of the audience throughout when the author makes him utter a blank-verse speech on almost every occasion? If this handicap is weighed in the balance, Sam is easily one of the best bits of work Mr. De Cordoba has done in recent years.

He is ably assisted by Mary Fowler, who takes the part of his young wife and gives her some of the rare beauty of an Old-Testament Ruth. In a lighter part, which is not without its excellent comedy, Lee Kohlmar brings life, vivacity and no little pathos to the play. A supporting cast of nearly one hundred people helps to complete a picture which comes very near to heroic proportions, failing only through the author's and the adapter's lack of perspective and adjustment. Whatever the fate of Sam Abramovitch, Miss Nichols deserves considerable credit for devoting a part of the proceeds of Abie's Irish Rose to a presentation of the sincerity and nobility of this one. It may yet find an appreciative audience among those who prefer honesty and beauty of thought to mere theatrical claptrap.

La Finta Giardiniera

IT IS not every season which brings to New York the first performance of an opera by Mozart, yet occasionally such a season arrives. One arrived a decade ago when the Society of American Singers presented The Impresario to enthusiastic audiences, and another arrived recently when the Intimate Opera Company gave La Finta Giardiniera at the Mayfair Theatre.

The Intimate Opera Company is an offshoot of the Provincetown Players, and it offers one more proof that it is the enthusiasm of these little-theatre organizations which is most likely to vitalize the American stage of the future. Last year this opera company inaugurated its season by giving Gluck's Orfeo, a work which the Metropolitan Opera Company has inexcusably allowed to fall from its repertory. This opera will be repeated again this year, and once more the Metropolitan ought to hang its head in shame. Truly, American music has need of just such organizations of semi-amateurs since the professionals are content merely to play safe.

It would, of course, be too much to say that the Intimate Opera Company gave an entirely adequate performance. Mozart singers are not to be picked up without long search and longer training, and the singers who appeared at the Mayfair Theatre were most of them hardly out of the student period. And yet so admirable was their spirit, so splendidly was the little orchestra conducted by Macklin Marrow, so sympathetic was the stage direction of Miss Helen Freeman, and so charmingly appropriate were the settings of Joseph Mullen, that the performance was one long to be remembered. Moreover, it was a delight to hear Mozart in a theatre the size of the Mayfair. It was just for such an intimate theatre that the Mozart operas were intended.

La Finta Giardiniera was written when Mozart was only twenty-one, yet it is veritable Mozart, and had its libretto been comprehensible it might very well have held the stage. It is written in the style of Italian opera buffa, but its story is so extraordinarily complicated that it is useless to attempt to follow it. One must simply take each scene by itself and listen to the music. The English text by Harrison Dowd was all that could be expected, and it was eminently singable. Of the performers the most satisfying were Miss Dorothy Chamberlin as Sandrina, and Miss Helen Sheridan as Arminda, though Richard Hale's fine voice as Nardo must also be praised. But the style of Mozart is essentially aristocratic, and only Miss Chamberlin and Miss Sheridan gave the sense of distinction both in diction and in personal bearing which the opera required. It is this quality which the organization must insist upon if its artists are to be really satisfying in eighteenth-century opera.

It is idle to assert that the English language is unfitted for song. Sung by artists who know and love their native tongue, it is surely as pleasing to the ear as German or even French. The trouble is with the librettists and the singers. In this case, Mr. Dowd proved equal to all demands; and in the singing, Miss Chamberlin, Miss Sheridan, and Mr. Hale proved equal in a somewhat lesser degree. The others were less fortunate, and especially in the spoken dialogues their voices destroyed much of the aristocratic atmosphere they should have evoked.

GRENVILLE VERNON.

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POEMS

To a Reader of Old Books

Oh, seek Him not in dusty scrolls
  And mouldered histories.
No charact'ry of theirs extols
  These Mysteries,
    The Cradled Child, the Cross, the Host.
    Only the Holy Ghost
Instructeth souls.

Oh, seek Him not at empty grave.
  "He is not here—but risen!"
Philosophies cannot enslave
  Nor histories prison
    The Cradled Child, the Cross, the Host.
    For lo, the Holy Ghost
Rolls stone from cave!

Nay, come, adore at Bethlehem
  And mourn at Calvary;
Taste the Bread of Jerusalem!
  Oh, pray to see
    The Cradled Child, the Cross, the Host.
    Then shall the Holy Ghost
Disclose thee Him!

ELIZABETH CASE.

Dancing High

Because of little spots of green
  Behind the piles of snow,
I said that here, where winter's been,
  The feet of dancers go.

Where some old hag goes stumbling now
  With heavy feet along,
Bare little feet go telling how
  The world might dance a song.

Bare, hesitant feet they hardly dare
  To leave the spots of green
But, dancing high, they do not care—
  They miss the snow between.

RAYMOND KRESENSKY.

Rain

Drip steadily on,
  Rain, upon the cold wet stone—
Cold heart, but sweet
  The stepping of your icy feet!

Shy and austere
  To those who hold you very dear,
Strike once again,
  Beauty, and heal me of my pain.

THEODORE MAYNARD.

From Chinese Prints

I

Towing a River Junk

Your sails like outspread condor wings
Loom dark on skies of pearly hue,
As coolies strain upon great ropes
Whose pungent scent is sharp as rue
When mighty hawsers dip and sag.
What hidden cargo do you bear
From templed cities, walled and old?
Rich robes for mandarins to wear?
Lacquer, or teakwood rarely carved,
Or tea which flowering hills supply?
You make no answer . . .
  Did I hear
A woman's faint, despairing cry?

II

Chinese Temple Gate

Across dim western hills, the sunset rays
With lingering, Midas touch are mellowing
The great red temple gates. Crows flit about
Dark, aromatic cedars, old as spring;
And magpies stab the quiet dusk with their
Shrill chattering. An aged priest whose face
Is etched with countless vigils and with toil,
Draws up the massive, stone-wheeled doors in place;
Closed and immutable are they . . .
Like ancient, mystical Cathay.

LOUISE CRENSHAW RAY.

Vesperal

Let not a day with the west wind blowing
Witness my going:
I should be desolate, swept away
Out of his wild, sweet day
And his sky, his flying sky.
Bid him delay a little yet
Till dust has had time to forget,
Then let him come, his old imperious passion
Twisting the grasses to his fashion
Wherever one may lie.

CHARLES L. O'DONNELL.

Joan of Arc

Where her strange two-pronged sword and bright hair were
Courage and truth and honor rode with her.
For that she is lovelier in memory
Than maids far lovelier can ever be.

Guinevere, and Iseult of Brittany,
And Helen for whose sake men rode the sea—
Long stilled are their wild hearts with all their scars.
But Joan still calls our souls to windy wars.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

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BOOKS

Short Talks with the Dead, by Hilaire Belloc. New York: Harper and Brothers. $3.00.

THERE are only two ways in which a book of essays by Hilaire Belloc might be adequately reviewed. One, to write about Mr. Belloc as brilliantly as he writes about the subjects he selects, is precluded by the literary limitations of the reviewer; and the other, to deal exclusively in very long quotations from the book itself, is precluded by the editorial limitations of space. The very range of topic and shifting humor of viewpoint, which are essential elements in Mr. Belloc's magic, stagger the critic with their impossibility of generalization. What can be done with an author who slips out of every classification before the ink is dry on the paper? Obviously, he should be enjoyed at first hand. Short Talks with the Dead is a book to be read, not reviewed.

But through the kaleidoscopic scenes and the multifarious interests, and through all the battledore and shuttlecock of the sublime and the ridiculous, there run two constant underlying themes. These might be crudely characterized as a hatred of selfishness and a contempt for superficiality; their roots strike into the very heart of Mr. Belloc's philosophy, and from them spring both his economic and aesthetic creeds.

Although the casual selfishness of the commonplace does not escape unscathed, it is the organized selfishness of economic exploitation and injustice that draws from Mr. Belloc the fullest measure of his anathema. The B.B.G. is a merciless and amusing excursion in this field. B.B.G. stand for Blind Beggars' Guild, a corporation founded by a cannily mean-minded Londoner to put mendicancy on its feet—to make of it a profitable "big business" instead of letting it waste its enormous financial possibilities in mere private enterprise. These organized beggars, mostly falling under the head of those who won't rather than of those who can't see, are sucked dry by those "higher up." The final paragraph must be quoted here:

"Today, apart from the grand master, the wardens, the district inspectors, the local inspectors, checkers, accountants and the rest, no less than 7,532 members of the Blind Beggars' Guild now stand upon the rolls, and there has recently been added, standing between the magnificent inquiry wing of the general office and the employers' lounge, a department which occupies itself with all the legitimate branches of banking, including, as a special feature, operations in the foreign exchanges. . . . Best of all, the deaths from starvation have been reduced from 3.337 percent to 3.256, and the illegitimate births from 8.932 to 7.615 per thousand. (Decimals to three places)."

Mr. Belloc's scorn for the superficiality of modern education and modern culture permeates the entire volume. The present-day artist (or should one say pseudo-artist) and his present-day admirer are alike exposed in their hypocrisy. These exposés are never heavy-handed takings-to-task; rather are they the lightest flicks of the whip, stinging nevertheless.

Henry Longan Stuart has caught Mr. Belloc's attitude toward life and letters in a memorable sentence. He says, "Literary values, one is aware, are not, by now, first values with Mr. Belloc; indeed, they are to him appreciable values at all only in so far as they reflect some first cause." And yet many of the essays in this volume are a delight from the standpoint of sheer writing. The swing of the prose halts one into reading aloud even in such utter nonsense as the treatise on the death of the novel. There is good fun in the book—delicious parodies in We Are Seven, and inconsequential chat in On Talking and Not Talking to People in Trains; but if you are looking for cheerful reading, beware of A Chinese Litany of Odd Numbers. Here is distilled the very essence of Mr. Belloc's bitter brew. One will suffice—The Nine Final Things: Disappointed expectation, irretrievable loss, inevitable fatigue, unanswered prayer, unrequited service, ineradicable doubt, perpetual dereliction, death, judgment.

GLADYS GRAHAM.

The Life of Samuel Johnson, by James Boswell; edited by Arnold Glover, with an introduction by Austin Dobson. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. Three volumes, $10.00.

"IT IS a truism, but none the less true for all that, that Samuel Johnson is more vivid to us in a book written by another man than in any of the books that he wrote himself." Thus far Mr. G. K. Chesterton. One may go even farther and point out that the greatest literary figure in eighteenth-century England was not a really great writer at all. Johnson's poems are admittedly academic and imitative; Rasselas is uninspired either as a narrative or moral treatise. The Lives of the Poets, admirable as they are, if compared with the work of Sainte-Beuve or Francesco de Sanctis show that Johnson never attained the creative level even in his chosen field of literary criticism. The inadequacies of James Boswell are even more striking. Boswell's character has been the favorite butt of historians and critics; his other writings are declared by the few who have read them to be devoid of the slightest touch of genius. How did it come about that the meeting of these two men should have resulted in one of the literary masterpieces of the world?

Johnson was a great man whose inner qualities never succeeded, save in the single instance of the brief Letter to Chesterfield, in permeating his too heavily learned style. Sad, solitary, and sincere in a peculiarly frivolous and superficial era—sad yet jovial, solitary in the midst of his club, sincere above his whims and inconsistencies, he fronted life four-square, and, indomitably courageous, took its blows without flinching, and triumphed over it. He was more real than any other in his generation. But this is not sufficient to explain the biography. Socrates was one greater than Johnson and he also revealed himself only in his life and conversation, yet this did not make the Memorabilia of his disciple Xenophon a masterpiece.

It is time that the critical depreciation of Boswell which has been accepted for over a century should be abandoned. After all, Boswell, not Johnson, wrote the biography. And the assumption that a masterpiece can be produced by a mediocre writer is a critical monstrosity. The fact that Boswell was hardly a striking example of morality is nothing to the point with Verlaine and Villon, Burns and Bryon standing by his side. Irrelevant also is the fact that he produced no other work of importance. This work he did produce. Its merits are his merits. Its qualities were qualities of none other than James Boswell himself. The confusion of the orthodox critical position is well illustrated in Neilson and Thorndike's authoritative History of English Literature. They repeat conventionally: "This is the best of biographies, partly because Johnson was such an interesting subject and talked so much, and partly because Boswell lived as much as possible with his hero and recorded everything he heard Johnson say." Then a long passage of brilliant description is quoted in which Johnson utters only two colorless phrases, and their account closes with an excellent char-

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acterization which in itself refutes their earlier statement: "His book is indeed more than a biography, it is a transcript of life—of men, women, conversation, character, manners, and wisdom, such as no novel ever assembled."

Boswell's place is, in truth, among the great eighteenth-century novelists. He was inferior to none in acuteness of observation, in descriptive power, in mastery of style. He was above them all in tenacity and sustained effort. And his lack of initial creative ability—which would otherwise have brought all his gifts to naught—was fortunately supplied by a marvelous model ready at hand. The biography may indeed be said to be the joint work of Boswell and Johnson, but only in the sense that Plutarch's Lives might be said to be due to the collaboration of Plutarch with each of the long-dead heroes of whom he wrote. Its success was no accident. Boswell was a self-conscious artist, and history has apparently justified his proud boast, "I am absolutely certain that my mode of biography . . . is the most perfect that can be conceived, and will be more of a life than any other work that has ever yet appeared."

ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES.

Presenting Mrs. Chase-Lyon, by Helen Walker. New York: The Devin-Adair Company. $2.50.

THE title of this pleasant potpourri is misleading, or at least it can be said to err by understatement, since Miss Walker presents in it a great many other things besides Mrs. Chase-Lyon. It is true that the dialogues which recount the questings after culture of that latest and most poignantly familiar of the descendants of Mrs. Leo Hunter are slightly longer than most of the papers devoted to other topics. But there are other topics, in plenty.

There are, for instance, fragments of the biography of a certain young female who is christened, with disarming humility, Miss Nobody. We meet Miss Nobody when she is still very young, listening to the counsels of the nun who conducted the Correction Class—an admirable religious, by all accounts, who terminates her lecture with the following unexceptionable advice: "You must always beware of a man wearing a big black moustache. If he should ever attempt to be familiar with you, you should turn with dignity and say, 'Young man, desist.'"

There, are, too, pages of imponderable, deftly written chit-chat dealing with the hebdomadal tribulations of an editorial staff (a staff, by the way, whose identity is as impenetrably masked as Miss Nobody's own). And there are several impressionistic sketches, of varying mood and merit.

Altogether, there is a good deal for one's money, and one is, perhaps, not entirely gracious in beginning with the plaintive observation that there is almost more than one had expected. But the observation is intended to imply only that, though we like Miss Walker's editors and enjoy her Miss Nobody, Mrs. Chase-Lyon is her best creation, and we could do with a great deal more of the lady than we actually get.

Miss Walker's method in making her presentation is both courageous and merciless. She reproduces without abatement the sort of talk which, though it actually does occur in this phenomenal world of ours, always sounds incredible. It is the one brand of articulate discourse which, in sheer triumphant fatuity, surpasses the debates of college sophomores and even the interchanges among the more advanced poets in Village attics—the brand which is heard only when the illuminati foregather at the board of some wealthy member of society who is out for the larger life. Miss Walker has evidently hearkened to it with malicious appreciation on more than one occasion, and she sets

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it down here, as I have said, without any softening in the interest of either artistic credibility or the quality of mercy.

The latter circumstance need not be lingered over, since it is unlikely that even the most compassionate reader would feel that cases of this sort call for mercy. But it is worth while pausing to make a point in regard to what I have called artistic credibility. It is true that Miss Walker's transcriptions of the Chase-Lyon dialogues have, all of them, that suggestion of exaggeration and excess which we associate with caricature. The only reply which can be made, I think, if this is put into the form of an objection, is the reply which Mr. Chesterton once rendered to the putative critics of the old Adelphi melodrama. "If," he said, in effect, "you want nice shading, delicate balance, a fine regard for rightness of expression, go to the play about the modern poor written by the modern artistic realist. But if you want life depicted as it really is among the modern poor, go to the Adelphi melodrama." Similarly, it would be possible to portray Mrs. Chase-Lyon and her ineffable guests with a more restrained artistry than Miss Walker employs; but that would be to depart, in precisely that degree, from the fantastic, excessive, gorgeously silly effect these people really produce. Miss Walker's dialogues are caricatures; but so are the originals. And if any ingrate remembers to object on the score of realism, he can only be invited to verify the essential accuracy of certain passages, and in all probability, their verbal accuracy as well, by listening in some night at Mrs. Chase-Lyon's board.

And, if he does, he will meet there, too, Miss Georgette Soule, who is really Mrs. Charlie Morse, but who is "one of the charter members of The Woman Speaks Club—one of the basic ideas of which is that all women should keep their maiden names, married, divorced or single"; Miss Sinecure, who will walk out the instant a cat is not provided to share her meal; Mr. I-Tellem-Blah, the oriental mystic, who wishes only "to know the soul—to caress it"; and several others whom no book could adequately hold, but whom life itself, in its quaint hospitality, amply harbors. And he will meet Mrs. Chase-Lyon, dedicated to the intellectuals, and blandly resolved to do her duty to civilization by becoming "intime with the more representative ones"— though she does administer the side caution to her niece, "Of course you must be careful not to grow too intime with them."

Yes, decidedly we can do with more of the spirit of laughing castigation which animates these pages in which Miss Walker too briefly presents Mrs. Chase-Lyon.

MARY KOLARS.

Spenser, by Emile Legouis. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $2.00.

George Meredith, by J. B. Priestley. New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.25.

PROFESSOR LEGOUIS'S interesting little book of comment makes no pretense at being a complete discussion of a great Elizabethan who, it seems, is returning to favor. His attention is directed first to the character of the poet, and secondly to the beauties and faults of what the poet accomplished. It seems to me nobody has stated more succinctly and discriminatingly the things that matter about Spenser as a man. M. Legouis brings out very clearly the essential duality which so many readers, surprisingly enough, miss altogether—the opposition in the poet of passion and moral restraint, of a Catholic love of beauty with a Puritan doctrinaire's sombre righteousness.

Almost as ably he decides that the moral content of the Faerie Queene is of no consequence, because the philosophical ideas expressed are trite and never very deeply fathomed. But perhaps one cannot judge this aspect of Spenser properly unless one can do either of two things: realize the moral content of the greater poems as directly applicable to oneself, or grasp the practical inferences which the poet thought would be conveyed by his allegory. With the vast and baffling problem of this allegory M. Legouis does not deal here; and in view of the fact that it probably never will be solved, at least for the average reader, we shall very likely be wise if we simply accept the poem (with our critic) as one of the most remarkable pageants ever created in the form of verse. Learning, sagacity, and genuine artistic sensibility are all reflected in M. Legouis's book, which has the added merit of an attractive style.

There are so few good books about George Meredith that the English Men of Letters volume, by J. B. Priestley, ought to be welcome. It follows the official schema of the series, compressing the biographical data into a couple of chapters and going on then to discuss the nature and significance of Meredithian ideas, narrative, and style. Mr. Priestley has diligently examined several myths and managed to explode them: his Meredith is considerably and surprisingly like Edmund Spenser—a man whose social desires were vastly different from and superior to his origins, a devotee of diction for its own sake, a moralizer through the mask of allegory.

The section devoted to the Meredithian concept of nature and man is illuminating and convincing; and though one may not always agree with the estimate placed on the novels, what is said concerning them seems generally reasonable and impersonal. It would be difficult to quarrel with the temper of Mr. Priestley's criticism, particularly if one lingers a little over fine passages like that commenting upon Harry Richmond. His style, however, is nothing short of atrocious. The clumsiest conceivable use of connectives, a wealth of loosely vagrant clauses, a number of constantly recurrent mannerisms—these and other matters are deplorable. Now that English criticism has really improved its method, it ought not to make a wholesale concession of its manners.

PAUL CROWLEY.

The Art of Seeing, by Charles Herbert Woodbury and Elizabeth Ward Perkins. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.00.

TO THE adult who knows perfectly well that he cannot draw or paint, it seems miraculous that children can do both when they are encouraged or persuaded to try. The Art of Seeing proves this point beyond the possibility of doubt. Little boys and girls, after a course in observation (somewhat like the game played by Kim in Lurgan Sahib's shop) are able, first to see a thing, which is educational, and then to reproduce its outline on paper, which is a genuine form of self-expression. Unhampered by conventions, untroubled by rules, they draw what they think they see; and if the results are always rude and sometimes fantastic, they have in them an element of life. The cat's legs may be imperfectly connected with its body; but somehow it walks on them. The turkey bears a general resemblance to the Rock of Gibraltar, but nevertheless it struts. I am glad that the picture of the lobster is not reproduced. A lobster presents such a painfully complicated outline that the mere thought of drawing one fills the heart of the reader—who is not an artist—with dismay.

The authors of The Art of Seeing are of the opinion that one half-hour a day would be well spent in teaching children to draw from memory the outlines of objects which they have

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carefully scrutinized. That little scholars delight in this recreative occupation can be well imagined. Compared to a spelling lesson, it must be unalloyed enjoyment. Compared to the daily torture of working out a sum on the blackboard, it must seem like the sport of angels. But I cannot help thinking that a good deal of sprightly intelligence is demanded of the very tired, and probably not very sprightly or intelligent teacher. To say casually: "Although a thorough training is necessary for supervisors and normal teachers of the Woodbury course in observation, the usual grade teacher who has a good working knowledge of educational psychology should be able to teach the course under careful supervision," is to infer that the average instructor has a working knowledge of educational psychology. She has not. (I say "she" because the he's are too few to count.) There are well-paid teachers in private schools, graduates of good colleges, who know everything under the sun except the children whom they teach.

The most interesting pages of the book deal with the elements of color. Here we reach the spirit of all childhood, which moves freely in a rainbow-tinted world, delighting in a box of paints rather than in a box of pencils. "The impulse of a child to color his drawing in a few flat masses is a sound one," says this wise little volume. "He does not see minor gradations; but gets a general color reaction unhampered by lesser things." This is true of everything which the child learns. Details have no place in his mind. Walter Bagehot points out that a boy studying history sees it as a whole, or he does not see it at all. He can follow the march of manhood along the great highways; but with the stopping-off places he has no concern. Such incidentals as dates, boundary lines, and languages belong to the dry-as-dust educational period. The wide world is the plaything of the child.

Although children like to draw and to paint, to illustrate what they conceive to be stories with what they conceive to be pictures, to compare results and to laugh at failures, Mr. Woodbury and Mrs. Perkins are not by way of providing a series of entertainments. Play palls on all children, and palls soonest when it is superinduced. "The object of the course is not to make necessary work easy, but to make hard work interesting." To teach observation by dramatization is a sure method of compelling children to see what is happening before their eyes. It is a good method of helping them to reproduce what they have seen. But when I read: "Teachers should not attempt to teach light and shade according to cause and effect until they have thoroughly dramatized the new point of view in their own minds," I feel a little sorry for the teacher.

AGNES REPPLIER.

Criminal Obscenity, by John Ford. New York; Fleming H. Revell. $1.50.

THERE can be no question that the problems presented on our stage, in the public films, and on the publishers' lists are such as may well cause serious concern among educators and guardians of morals and decorum; and the legislative efforts of Justice John Ford and his associates merit the due appreciation and sympathy of decent folk of any age and condition. For it is true that "we have grown great and our democracy has triumphed through the sterling virtues of our citizenry. The American home has ever been the fountainhead of morality, the sanctuary of youthful innocence."

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qualities of fine peasant stock from Europe shattered and destroyed in the intermediate disorders of the Americanization of their children, that first American generation which has given so large a count in our criminal records. We have seen, also, the change in the complexion of our immigration when the semi-barbarian races of the South and East are canvassed from birth for the great crossing-over, which is to mean for them a prosperity, wealth and position to which their ancestors never even aspired at home. With them, also, come their standards in morals, ethics, their practices in sex life and physical promiscuities. They encounter here in America a system of schooling that concerns itself with their brains—in an amateur sort of way—and neglects character, religion and all deep-seated moral education in the name of liberalism, materialism, and success. Success means money, and the making of it is an exploitation of the public more or less honest, reasonable or abhorrent. So long as we have large audiences for filthy plays, vast populaces for salacious films, public shops and public libraries bulging with the questionable literatures of Europe, Asia, Africa and our own United States, just so long shall we have purveyors, and just so long supply and demand will continue to meet and confabulate.

To face these conditions, certain bodies of our citizens representing the moral, religious elements in our civic-uplift work, have long been engaged in study, conference, protest, and attack. They are met with opposition more or less sincere from the property interests, the yellow press and the children of freedom, if not Belial, in general. The result has been successful in some ways, in the regularization of vice which for the most part has merely changed its direction, so that if not good at least the average wrong-doer is more careful. We have attempted to reform our stage by the creation of white lists and recommendations of wholesome activities. It does not seem that this is effort enough. There should be a black list, bravely presented in the face of the evil: a definite pledge from decent people and decent organizations that they will not spend money upon the listed books, plays or dances that offend the board and the not intolerant standards of propriety.

We are suffering from so many curtailments of our liberties under blue laws, Volstead acts and lock-and-chain legislation that a large part of the public may be well excused if it responds half-heartedly to further enactments at law which might easily be metamorphosed into what would only amount to more sleek parochialism. The old French and Italian fathers and mothers understood these conditions: they kept their children properly guarded in their homes; curtailed their theatrical adventurings, and their unrestricted browsings in the poison-ivy glades of what is so easily called literature. In short, they recognized a spade for a spade and called it so. We should learn and follow the practice of the old chemists and pharmacists and mark the poisons clearly with the skull and cross-bones, and forbid the children to play with them under any excuse of art, freedom, enlightenment, experience, or what is sometimes called "education."

THOMAS WALSH.

The Pool, by Anthony Bertram. New York: George H. Doran Company. $2.50.

THE slum streets of The Pool fester below Limehouse, and Anthony Bertram has Burked them in their homely cockney viciousness, without the additional taint of Chinese vice. The foul and sordid gloom of London slum life—its highest physical palliatives, sex indulgence and drink; its loftiest spiritual indulgence, the cinema—is revealed with an intense, movingly sincere realism.

Rosie Betts, the belle of Rotherhithe, has gullioned her way to provocative slum girlhood only to hold at bay the eager boys who yearn to conquer her in the flesh. She has no higher educational ambitions; she is good only in a technically physical sense, but an individual independence of spirit and a pride which brooks no superior are ideals she defends in the foul idiom of her habitat. Ernie Parker she inclines to out of a vague soul-sympathy; and when his brother Sid meanly advantages her while she is drunk, and boasts, she faces down his truth with her gallant lie. She bears her deformed and defective babe in secret, fiercely resolving to bring it up to murder its father. Sid, maddened to see the one truth he has told in life scornfully overborne by her falsehood, finally confronts her before the other boys with proof positive, only to go down in defeat once more when she tells how shamefully he got the better of her, and to fall into disrepute and hopeless sottishness. Rosie scornfully refuses to use the child as a tool of vengeance: Sid is not worth it. Instead, she drowns her wretched babe: "There y' are, Pool. . . . It weren't no use to anyone, an' its life 'ud a bin 'ell." Ernie, whom she has come to love, has married. But she takes Bert, a young prize-fighter, for a husband—her drowning the child makes no difference to him—since he is willing to let her remain captain of her soul, and take what she chooses to give. Throughout The Pool is the black, turgid backwater of this well-written and convincing drama of the festering life of civilized primitives. Rosie stands out as a soul which finds itself, in a spiritualization which, albeit purely pagan, is a spiritualization none the less.

FREDERICK H. MARTENS.

Selected Poems, by Chaim Nachman Bialik. New York: The New Palestine. $1.25.

THE arrival in America of the much heralded poet, Bailik, has been followed by the publication in English of his Selected Poems. The enthusiasm of his followers is hardly warranted by these versions in English, of the gloomy, dithyrambic lamentations of oriental woe in which there is so little promise of salvation or hope. The long poem, The Dead of the Wilderness, contains many passages of descriptive power and lugubrious beauty. One looks in vain for the original note or the creative phrase, passage or allusion. The poem, The Masmid, is a study of a mysterious type of Hebrew ascetic that seems strangely rare in America. It is pantheistic mysticism developed in the Talmudic schools, and the refrain—"Oi, Oi, omar Rabba, omar Abbaya—Thus Rabba said, and thus Abbaya taught"—runs through it reiteratively. We are enlightened, perhaps, in the lines:

> "Oi, tanu rebanan—till forty years
> The great Akiba was an empty vessel,
> A shepherd ignorant, and he became,
> Through study of the Torah, like a banner
> Unto his people—and I am yet a boy,
> O God, I pray Thee, take me as I ask,
> Take all Thou wilt, my body and its blood,
> For I am vowed to Thee and to Thy Torah,
> For her my lips will move, for her my voice
> Will never fail, and for her sake I stand
> Firm rooted to my place and move not hence."

T. C.

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BRIEFER MENTION

The Tree of Love, by Ramon Lull; translated by E. Allison Peers. New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.50.

MR. PEERS has translated the latter half of the Catalan mystical treatise, Philosophia Amoris, the work of the Blessed Ramon Lull at the height of his powers. The first Catalan edition was published only in 1901, and Mr. Peers's version in English is the first rendering of it into a modern tongue. The previous volume of Ramon Lull published in English by Mr. Peers, The Lover and the Belovéd, is here supplemented by the full philosophy of the Majorcan mystic in his praises of the philosophy of love so much neglected for the philosophy of knowledge. It is a mature and splendid treatise and deserves the serious attention of all students of mystical philosophy. The brilliant style and highly colored imagination of the Blessed Ramon are richly displayed in the manner that makes his romance of Blanquerna—the predecessor of the Utopias and The Pilgrim's Progresses—a classic that argues for the preservation of the Catalan dialect. Ramon Lull is a figure in Church history and in the most glowing pages of missionary annals; he was a great scholar and inaugurator of important Christian undertakings. Popes and kings delighted to honor the saintly figure who was dragged from his rostrum in Bugia and stoned to death by furious Moslems; he figures in chivalry as well as in scholarship and religion. We owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Peers for his translations of Ramon Lull's works.

Documents Illustrating the History of Civilization in Mediaeval England, translated and edited by R. Trevor Davies. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. $3.25.

THE study of mediaeval conditions advances rapidly. From romantic reconstructions of chivalry, and descriptive monographs, the road has gone steadily toward the documents themselves; and libraries which have tranquilly collected dust for centuries now bustle with students intent upon adapting archives to the general reading public. Mr. Davies, for his part, offers a pleasing variety of documents bearing upon life in England from the time of the Norman Conquest to the close of the fifteenth century. Political, religious, military, and social aspects of the era circumscribed are set forth in pertinent excerpts from reliable or at least representative writers. Of particular interest are passages from the works of Roger Bacon and a section from the chronicle of Jocelyn de Brakelonde. The book ought to be of value to a wide class of readers.

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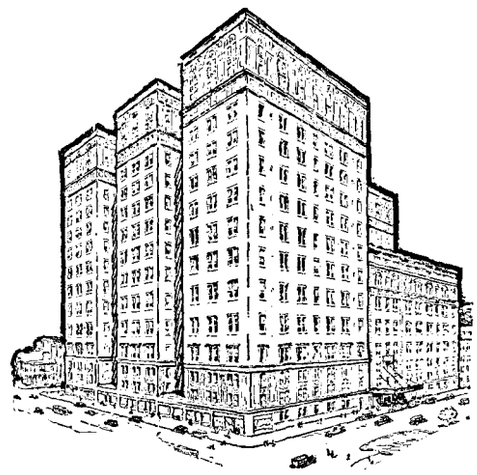

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THE QUIET CORNER

I counsel thee, shut not thy heart nor thy library.—C. LAMB.

"Caramels?" asked Dr. Angelicus suspiciously, as he peered into the box of candy Euphemia was offering him.

"Nothing else but," replied Euphemia with satisfaction.

"No, thank you," said the Doctor in a tone of aversion.

"But they are very good," protested Euphemia.

"The last time I tampered with one," explained the Doctor, "I lost a tooth on the first bite."

"Ah, I see; once biting, twice shy," remarked Euphemia.

"And ever since," went on the Doctor, "I've been spending hours a day at the dentist's."

"Now why," asked Euphemia, "does that remind me of Meeteetse, Wyoming? Oh, yes; I remember. It's this item from the social column of the Meeteetse News."

Euphemia began reading between caramels: "'Mrs. Charles S. Wilson and family spent Monday in Meeteetse, Mrs. Wilson spending her time comfortably ensconced in a dental chair.'"

"Now a dental chair is a seat in which one could never be comfortably ensconced," protested the Doctor.

"Ah, but you forget," said Euphemia. "This dental chair is in Meeteetse; and Meeteetse, as I have often told you, is different."

"Prove it," said the Doctor.

"I will," replied Euphemia, turning to another society item. "Even marriage there is different, for hearken to this: 'W. R. Kane is off at last with a rushing start for Kansas City, Missouri, to see his wife and daughter whom he has never seen before.'"

"Isn't there a comma after 'wife'?" asked Angelicus.

"Not a suspicion of one," averred Euphemia.

"Perhaps, after all, I will try matrimony—in Meeteetse," ruminated the Doctor.

"Don't be too hasty," advised Euphemia, "for here is a paragraph that may discourage you from any such idea: 'Miss Mabel Smith, who has taught in the Meeteetse schools for two years, has announced her recent marriage to Mr. John Hull. The day so often mentioned as one's happiest and saddest, was January 5, when the ceremony of cementation was performed.

"Cementation?" queried Dr. Angelicus.

"To make the marriage a concrete fact," explained Euphemia. "I thought the finality of that word would frighten you off."

"It does sound rather ominous," said the Doctor. "But not as upsetting as what a young Spaniard said to me recently."

"What was that?" asked Euphemia.

"I asked him," went on the Doctor, "what he meant to do with his life. A romantic look came into his large brown eyes, as he electrified me by replying: 'When I go back to my own country, I intend to marry occasionally.'"

"But divorce is frowned upon in Spain," protested Euphemia.

"Exactly," said the Doctor. "You see, he is only learning English. He didn't mean 'occasionally'; he meant 'eventually.'"

"Eventual marriages are better than occasional ones," remarked Euphemia.

"That reminds me of a headline I saw not long ago in the New York Times," said Angelicus. "It read: 'William Anderson, Sportsman, Weds at Seventy-Seven. Bride Is Divorcée.'"

"Sportsmen will be sportsmen," remarked Euphemia. "And sportsmanship is an admirable thing."

"Not when it's foolhardy," announced the Doctor, as he surreptitiously stole a caramel.

—THE LIBRARIAN.

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